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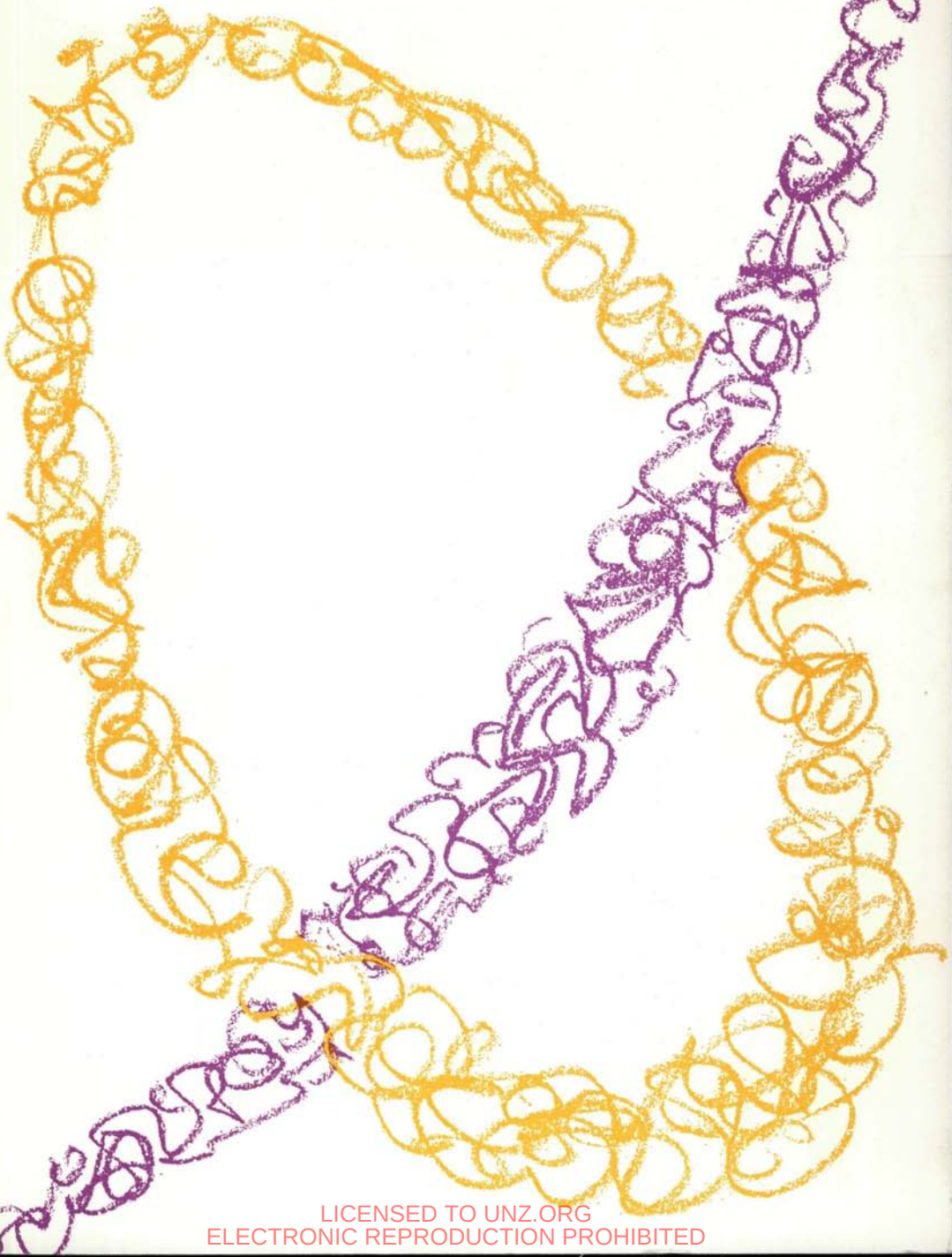

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WINTER, 1971-72 VOLUME XXXVIII, NUMBER 4

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NOTES

MORRIS DICKSTEIN is working on a book on the sixties. His study of Yeats was published by Chicago last spring. . . . **BUS** is an Italian artist. . . . **HERBERT MARCUSE's** book on "the New Left facing the counterrevolution" will be out shortly. . . . **JAMES BERTOLINO** is editor of **Abraxas.** Mr. Bertolino lives in Ithaca. . . . Atheneum has just brought out **MARSHALL BERMAN's The Politics of Authenticity.** Mr. Berman is working on a book called **All That is Solid Melts in the Air: A Study of Modernism and Modernization.** (His "Notes Toward a New Society" is a shorter version of a longer piece.) . . . **MAUREEN HOWARD** is currently teaching at the New School, and is, she tells us, "really finishing a new novel." . . . Dial is bringing out **Blues for a Dying Nation, GERALD ROSEN's** first novel, in February. Mr. Rosen lives in Marin County and teaches writing at Sonora State. . . . The conversation with **DJILAS** in this issue took place in English, in Belgrade. It is part of a longer talk **ROBERTO RUBERTO** had with Mr. Djilas. Mr. Ruberto lives in Rome. . . . **ROBIN MAGOWAN** is back in California this year. . . . **RICHARD BENDER** is Chairman of the Program in Building Technology at the Department of Architecture at Berkeley. . . . **G. S. FRASER** lives and works in England. . . . A part of **MARK MIRSKY's Down Blue Hill Avenue** was in the last **PR.** Bobbs-Merrill will bring it out next spring. . . . **Preferences, RICHARD HOWARD's** critical anthology of American poetry will be published by Viking next year.

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United Nations Assistance to Refugees from East Pakistan in India

By the end of October the Government of India reports that over 9.6 million refugees had entered India from East Pakistan. In the areas most affected by the influx refugee camps have been set up and emergency relief supplies made available from both local resources and from contributions channelled through the United Nations.

Some $139 million have now been pledged or received through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees acting as the focal point for U.N. assistance. The needs of the refugees nevertheless remain immense. On 13 October the High Commissioner issued an urgent world-wide appeal for additional contributions so that the most basic needs of the refugees would continue to be met.

●

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MEMORANDA

Le Trahison des Clercs. No matter what they do the intellectuals suffer, like Joseph K., from generic guilt. As the tide swings they are alternately accused of betraying their calling by being too political or not political enough, particularly by those for whom self-flagellation is a form of consciousness. (In fact, one wonders how, with such a record, they can ever be thought of as the "conscience of mankind" or "the vanguard of art and thought." And if *they* aren't, who is?)

The latest indictment comes from Jean Paul Sartre. In an interview in the *New York Times Magazine,* Sartre accuses the intellectuals of "bad faith" because they limit their political activity to the typewriter and fail to take to the streets in support of the revolutionary workers and students. At one swoop, Sartre has not only reversed Julien Benda's famous criticism — that the intellectuals "play the game of political passions" — but he has also resurrected the old Stalinist logic, according to which anyone who didn't come out for the party was a bourgeois escapist if not an outright counterrevolutionary. Sartre goes the Stalinists one better, though: they were content to have an intellectual support them with his pen; Sartre wants his body too. Apparently he doesn't care where your mind is, so long as your body is on the line. "It is very easy," Sartre says, "to denounce the war in Vietnam by signing petitions or marching in a parade with 20,000 comrades. But it doesn't accomplish one-millionth of what could be accomplished if all your [American] intellectuals went into the ghettoes, into the Oakland port, to the war factories, and risked being mishandled by the roughs of the maritime union. *In my view, the intellectual who does all his fighting from an office is counter-revolutionary today, no matter what he writes*" [my italics].

One has to admire Sartre's intellectual achievements and his political courage. But it must be said too that this kind of romantic leftism does the socialist cause no good. It misreads the political situation, particularly in this country, and its effect can only be to inflame those hopped-up kids of all ages who already can't wait for the revolution. Surely Sartre has read Lenin's warnings about infantile leftism, a "disorder" that isolates radicals from their potential supporters by glorifying violent and uncompromising gestures. "Inexperienced revolutionists," cautioned Lenin, who was not exactly a softie, "often think that legal means of struggle are opportunist. . . . On the other hand, they think that illegal means . . . are revolutionary."

What's unfortunate is that because of the appeal of his name, Sartre's *barricade-itis* might be catching, further spreading the antiintellectualism already almost epidemic on the left.

Black Writing: Separate but Equal. In my opinion, Morris Dickstein's piece in this issue of PR is one of the few attempts — besides Richard Gilman's — to talk about the claims of the so-called black aes-

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thetic as though it were an intellectual issue and not just an occasion for ranting, black or white. The value of Dickstein's sympathetic and concrete approach to the problem of black writing is that it takes it out of the realm of abstract aesthetics, seeing it both in its own terms and in relation to the whole of literature.

But the trouble with reducing a theoretical issue to a practical one is that it leaves the questions it raises hanging in the air, and by trying to have it both ways is caught in a basic contradiction. I am not suggesting that Dickstein or anyone else can be expected to solve at one stroke a complex and tangled problem; nor am I arguing that criticism can be any freer of contradictions than the experience it deals with. But I do think Dickstein's piece, as interesting and intelligent as it is, ends precisely at the point at which it began.

The question raised by Dickstein — and by the exponents of the black aesthetic — is simply whether black writing is part of the same tradition as white writing and therefore is to be judged in the same way. As we know, the more militant black writers insist that their work comes out of a different life, and hence cannot be judged by white critics or by the white criteria of the western literary tradition. And it is this question Dickstein sidesteps in concluding, if I understand him, that the fate of black writing is tied to the consciousness it reflects.

But when he gets away from theory, Dickstein takes a different tack. For when he talks about specific works he applies almost as a reflex the standards commonly used in discussing white books. When, for example, he says Baldwin's novels are seriously flawed, or Wright was not really a naturalist, he might just as well be writing about white novelists. And when he notes that the younger black writers are returning to more traditional forms, his terms and categories assume a common idea of literature and a common critical language.

Though Dickstein hesitates to draw the conclusions implicit in his practice, his instincts are clearly right. For even if in theory new movements affect old values, and different cultures enlarge our idea of literature, the fact is that we don't consciously set up special approaches to Russian or Irish or Jewish writing. It goes without saying that Dostoevsky was a Russian of his period. But this does not mean that Dostoevsky must be approached differently from, say, Joyce or Mann. To claim a separate aesthetic for black writing might have a political or psychological meaning but makes no aesthetic sense. And such invidious discriminations can be enforced only if white writers are willing to deny their own objectivity and competence to judge or grasp any writing but their own. There are limits even to white self-denial, especially in literature, which should be free of inhumanity, and hence of guilt.

Delmore Schwartz. I am unable to review the posthumous essays of Delmore Schwartz, because I was until the last years of his life too close to him. And being too close to Delmore meant not only a kind of protective fondness but an endless struggle against being too entangled with one of the most active egos I have known. His strong mind, his weak but avid psyche, his awkward, stubborn body were constantly reaching out and wrapping themselves around an idea, a

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person, a compulsion. He enveloped you with his feelings and his ideas, even though you knew he was always satisfying his needs not yours.

Delmore was one of the most intelligent and probably the most tortured writer I have known. His intelligence was of that instantaneous, luminous variety one associates with an unusual mind: there was nothing in any field he couldn't grasp immediately and unlike those writers who pay homage to the cult of the creative by nurturing their own ignorance and narrowness Delmore was just as much at home with ideas as with questions of taste and sensibility.

But the truth is Delmore was an anguished man, and as he got older his torments spread over his whole being. Even when he was younger his charm, his intelligence and his exuberance were clouded by his delusions and suspicions. He was always paranoid, but in his last years his paranoia took almost complete possession of him, though unlike most paranoid writers he was sensitive about the way people treated him, and not about what they thought of his work. Hence his friends kept falling away. There were never too many of them: earlier the most loyal were William Barrett, Robert Lowell, Anatole Broyard and Milton Klonsky; later Dwight Macdonald, Meyer Shapiro and myself. But at the end he wore us out, though, as I recall Dwight and Meyer seemed able to cope with him longer than I could, and I saw little of him just before he died. One had to have almost a professional, self-effacing tolerance to take the rages, the demands, the recriminations, the fantasies, mostly about money, but often about being generally betrayed by those few people who stuck to him and tried to help him.

Now a legend is growing up around Delmore, partly because he lends himself to the myth of the pure, suffering artist, and people who had no use for him are getting in on the act. I think it would be more fitting and a nicer testimonial to his memory if we recalled Delmore as he was and as we felt about him. His large, perhaps unrealized talent, his intelligence, his enthusiasm, were of a piece with what made him so difficult, with all the things that destroyed him. But when Delmore was at his best, at his most lovable, I can remember the excitement of his wildly animated conversation, with Delmore laughing, roaring, jerking, his jacket twisted, his shirt half out of his pants, smelling of whiskey and cigarettes, telling endless stories and scoring rhetorical points, long into the night. He was so strong I never thought he would die.

W.P.

EDITOR'S NOTE

With this issue Richard Poirier is leaving the Editorial Board, to be able to give more time to writing and teaching. While we're sorry he's no longer an editor, we're glad to say that he'll be staying on as a consultant.

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Morris Dickstein

THE BLACK AESTHETIC IN WHITE AMERICA

A time to be silent and a time to speak. Today black people in this country have begun to speak for themselves. In the general hubbub of voices loosed by the sixties theirs is the most compelling. More and more they speak only to each other, yet their voices ultimately alter our sense of who and where we are.

In the midst of this tumult, upon which so much depends, serious, well-meaning men insist that for us it is a time to keep silent. Richard Gilman tells us that black men are creating for themselves a set of new myths that "are not subject to being brought into the critical arena and there dispatched or pardoned." Following Fanon he asserts that our humanistic "Mediterranean" values have been so corrupted by our racist practice that we have no warrant to apply them to the new dimensions of the black experience as they now emerge. Hence the white critic should withdraw, should "stand back and listen, *without comment,* to these new and self–justifying voices." To Harold Cruse the white critic is more than irrelevant, he is pernicious, for he "has a tendency to encourage the black writer not to be a black writer at all, but to be what he calls a universal writer."

These arguments make little sense to me, though they trouble me deeply. *Is that criticism?* — a defense of a static set of values, a summary court to dispatch or pardon books and writers, a eulogy of an empty universality over lived experience? I can understand when Cruse tells us that black people must develop indigenous cultural institutions, such as theaters and periodicals, and can only do so without direct white participation or support. I can understand

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why he should urge black artists to deal with black themes. But who are the white critics who direct them instead to some nonexistent man-in-general? On the contrary, works by and about blacks are published and ritually praised by whites these days as if no standards were applicable.

In that sense the moratorium on criticism that Cruse and Gilman have suggested is today a fact. Like university faculties and other liberal institutions, literary critics, even as they may dispute the logic of black separatism, have come to accept it in practice. Universities, once stubbornly resistant to the notion that there was more than one culture in America — the official one of course — now happily consign blacks and other ethnics to basically segregated and sometimes shoddy black studies programs, just as they ship counterculture types off to the "experimental college," effectively reinforcing the status quo in the college as a whole. Meanwhile publishers, with little sense of historic redress but sniffing a bonanza, churn out anthologies to cash in on the new courses, and hunt up their own token black writers and black editors. The new books that follow on this commercial push are welcomed but patronized by the reviewing media, as if all this activity were simply politic and therapeutic, as if these writers belonged to another world scarcely related to our own.

Whenever one of our literary institutions does try to take the new black thing seriously, it inevitably does so in a separatist way. Blacks say they want it that way, and deserve to have the chance, even when the results prove embarrassing. How can one fault publishers for launching all-black periodicals, or magazines for hunting up black reviewers for black titles, reviewers who often end up writing (so to speak) within the family? How can one fault white critics who pass up books that blacks themselves say they have no competence and no right to review? Except for Richard Gilman (whose attentions were perforce valedictory) and Irving Howe, no major white critic has seriously engaged the new black writing of the sixties. Few white critics have been really attentive to any black writer since Baldwin — though, to be fair, precious few have been at ease with much else that has happened during the past decade.

This would matter little if black culture were indeed only a family affair, as many blacks would now have us believe, but it is too deeply entwined with our own recent cultural upheaval, which

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it helped to spark and which has helped it to flourish. It is our own history that is enacted in their pages, which we too have lived, and which has influenced us crucially. I'm not speaking of the heavy debts which the counterculture owes to black music and life style — debts which have repeatedly been commemorated, at least since *The White Negro* — but more broadly of the whole spirit and tone of America since 1960. Consider how, at every stage, the black quest for social justice and cultural identity finds its immense echo in the culture at large. First, in the integrationist period of the early sixties, the direct-action tactics of the freedom rides, marches, sit-ins, inaugurate a new social consciousness, a politics of confrontation and protest the likes of which we have not seen since the thirties. Then, as integration gives way to nationalism and separatism, the ethnic self-assertion of blacks is imitated not only by other ethnic groups but by women, homosexuals and other second-class citizens. Much as it might discomfit him to think so, the black man in an afro, proud of his skin and hair, has helped enable the gay person to "come out." The black challenge to American liberalism — the sixties' challenge, as it turned out — becomes in a different key the feminist or homosexual attack on Freud. The message at bottom is the same: your pluralism is a sham, a cover for assimilation and psychic aggression. "Come in," sings the siren, "and be like us. Park your identity at the door."

The rejection of this message is still only marginally widespread in the general culture, though not among the young, who as yet show remarkably few signs of aging into their parents. But among blacks it constitutes an immense revolution in consciousness whose final outcome remains incalculable. Who has not been riveted, fascinated, perhaps frightened, by these majestic and angry new blacks, by turns hard-edged and remorseless or smoothly self-delighting, all rage and assertion in public but sometimes twinkling with affability, even self-irony, in private? How hard it is to recall that scarcely a generation ago, while black men died in a Jim Crow army under a liberal president, Richard Wright had to mobilize his own large resources of anger to tell the world that whatever the appearances to the contrary, Negroes were not really very happy with their lot. This was the message of *Native Son* in 1940 and *Black Boy,* his 1945 autobiography, and, despite his quarrel with

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Wright, it remained the burden of James Baldwin's early essays as they began to appear in the late forties. Irving Howe has written that "the day *Native Son* appeared American culture was changed forever. . . . [I]t made impossible a repetition of the old lies. . . . Richard Wright's novel brought out into the open, as no one ever had before, the hatred, fear and violence that have crippled and may yet destroy our culture."

Well, American culture is an elephantine thing, hard to change with a novel. But the consciousness of blacks themselves was indeed altered, and surely no black writer could ever tell himself the old lies. Whatever the later attacks on Wright, his work became an effective North Star of Negro writing, which helped his successors to find their own directions. Attacked, abandoned as a literary example by Baldwin and Ellison, whose early work he had typically encouraged, he has become, after long eclipse and a decade after his death, the favored ancestor of a great many new black writers who reject his successors and feel much akin to his militant spirit. Parricide, after all, is one of the quicker methods of succession, and nothing can more conveniently legitimate the bloody deed than an appeal to the authority of the grandfather, himself the previous victim. Thus, the rapid evolution of black awareness these past decades has repeatedly crystallized in moments of sharp generational conflict which, to a curious outsider, cast much light on the origins of the present phase of black writing and black culture.

Despite the inevitable metaphor of parricide, it would be superficial to think that Baldwin alone killed Richard Wright until the angry sixties came along to resurrect him. In some sense Wright's kind of novel was already dying or dead by the time he came to it. In *Black Boy* Wright describes the impact of reading Dreiser for the first time: "I was overwhelmed. . . . It would have been impossible for me to have told anyone what I derived from these novels, for it was nothing less than a sense of life itself. All my life had shaped me for the realism, the naturalism of the modern novel." How quaint the last phrase must have seemed in the late forties and fifties, when the modern novel meant the modernist novel; when everyone knew without reading him that Dreiser was crude and vulgar compared to Henry James; when, increasingly, the only modern American

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classics in fiction were Hemingway, Faulkner and (perhaps) Fitzgerald; when every writer was summoned to the bar of style and the test of inwardness and self-consciousness, of the private life in general, where both Dreiser and Wright were found wanting.

Nothing so clearly dates Baldwin's early essays, especially his attacks on Wright, than the assurance that the novel has intrinsically little to do with society but rather with "something more than that, something resolutely indefinable, unpredictable . . . the disquieting complexity of ourselves . . . this web of ambiguity, paradox, this hunger, danger, darkness . . . this power of revelation which is the business of the novelist, this journey toward a more vast reality which must take precedence over all other claims." I excerpt these phrases from "Everybody's Protest Novel," Baldwin's famous attack on *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Native Son,* which still seemed persuasive ten years ago but now, with its uppercase mockery of "Causes" and a writer's "Responsibility," seems fatally marred by the end-of-ideology mood that produced it. It is a nice question how a purely formalist conception of the novel came to be articulated not so much through Jamesian notions of craft — though there was much of that — but through a pseudometaphysical rhetoric, a kitsch existentialism, bordering less on mysticism than on gibberish. Yet writers spoke of the novel that way all the time, as a mysterious inward quest toward some ineffable region of personality. Mailer spoke of the novel that way, still does perhaps, and became the only one of the band to make something of such hash. What chance had Richard Wright in that climate of "critical thinking"?

Native Son is an untidy novel, many novels. It looks backward to *An American Tragedy,* sideways to a lurid potboiler, forward, strikingly, to *L'Etranger* and the ideas of Sartre. Two-thirds of the way through, it changes horses and devolves into a curious but inert ideological essay on a novel that has essentially ended but that has until this point been remarkably free of the clichés of proletarian fiction and the party line. This immensely long and disappointing coda has served to obscure the book and date it. The hidden strength of *Native Son* — hidden from formalist and Communist alike — is in essence Dostoevskian rather than Mike Goldian: a harrowing mastery of extreme situations, of the mind *in extremis,* a medium not so much naturalistic as hallucinatory, dreamlike and poetic.

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But it was the social dimension, which Dreiser and other American realists shared, that dropped out of serious American fiction toward the end of the forties. "Social affairs," Baldwin announced in the preface to his first book of essays, *Notes of a Native Son* (1955), "are not generally speaking the writer's prime concern, whether they ought to be or not." Baldwin's novels illustrate his conviction all too painfully. As Eldridge Cleaver said of *Another Country,* "his characters all seem to be fucking and sucking in a vacuum." On the other hand that same preface is titled "Autobiographical Notes," and we ought not to underestimate the boldness and healthy egotism of Baldwin's thrusting his private case forward as significant public example. Baldwin had before him, as he later acknowledged, the precedent of *Black Boy,* but there was little else to encourage him to break the then prevalent mold of the impersonal artist who peers at the public through the coy mask of his "works" — a mold to which he generally adhered in his novels, as did Mailer. Later the precedent of Baldwin himself would make Mailer's own breakthrough more thinkable. *Advertisements for Myself,* with most of its rich, bloody life in the italics of its autobiographical transitions, appeared four years after *Notes of a Native Son.* And *The Armies of the Night* is quite deliberately Mailer's *Fire Next Time,* the essay that would explode into a book, the journalistic occasion that would transform itself into a crucial act of self-definition (and, not by chance, a national sensation).

But where Baldwin and even Mailer (despite his fascination with power) must *reach out* to their public subjects (the Black Muslims, the Pentagon march), then only to make that distance and ambivalence their true subject, Wright's *Black Boy,* though more purely autobiographical, sits in effortless mastery over *its* social theme, the condition of the black man in the South. Yet Wright's book is also more convincingly personal, in delineating his own special misery, his dawning self-recognition and final escape north. Neither Baldwin nor Mailer, immense egos both, have as yet written true autobiographies; their revelations are obsessive but selective. Genuine sons of the forties and fifties, they remain essentially private persons despite their fame. Wright, however, a disaffected son of the thirties, did write an autobiography at age thirty-seven, but honed and sorted his memories into a coherent fable, aiming, like all great autobiogra-

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phers, to fashion a myth — as usual one of conversion or election — rather than to convey information about the past.

In developing this myth, Wright's books embody a fundamental pattern of black writing, that of the *Bildungsroman,* or, "how I got my consciousness raised." Thus Wright himself in *Black Boy* shifts from deference and oppression to rebellion and flight, and *Native Son* moves from a crime and punishment plot to the story of how Bigger Thomas, by accepting his crime, achieves a measure of freedom and awareness. But in the novel the theme and its material increasingly clash; the crime is finally *not* acceptable, nor is it reducible to symbolism. Pursuing the matter, Wright's own liberated consciousness becomes too heavy, too subtle for Bigger, yet remains too entangled in the remnants of the murder plot to evade moral confusion.

Ralph Ellison complains that "Bigger Thomas had none of the finer qualities of Richard Wright, none of the imagination, none of the sense of poetry, none of the gaiety," and in his own novel, *Invisible Man,* he transformed the *Bildungsroman* into a freewheeling, episodic, surreal mode whose hero could brook diverse kinds of consciousness. In prose, black writers generally tend toward an urgent but impure mixture of fiction, autobiography and discursiveness, and the most original things about *Invisible Man* are its eclecticism and discontinuity, akin to the black humor of the sixties, where technical and verbal inventiveness fills the place of realistic setting and psychology. Yet Ellison's book essentially follows the pattern of *Black Boy* and *Native Son,* as do *Soul on Ice,* Malcolm X's autobiography and George Cain's very impressive recent novel, *Blueschild Baby,* whose hero is named George Cain, where the distinction between fiction and autobiography has disappeared entirely. In this last book the scene and subject change but not the basic pattern: for Cain the journey goes not from South to North but from heroin addiction, prison and self-hatred to self-respect, writing and above all, as with Cleaver, back to the arms of the black woman. Even more classically, Malcolm X's autobiography reenacts the fundamental pattern of spiritual autobiography since Augustine, built around not one but two profound conversions — first to the Nation of Islam, then from black racism toward a radicalism both more humane and more political.

James Baldwin is a distinctive figure here, with his spiritual style rooted in the Negro church, but his essays follow the pattern

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far more than his novels do, which helps account for their superiority. Baldwin's problem as a novelist is not simply his difficulty in fully imagining other people or his inability to take the form in hand, as Ellison did, and mold it to his own vision. It has been Baldwin's misfortune to move from one false notion of the novel — the New Critical notion of a highly crafted, distanced object — to the exact opposite fallacy, by which an aimless assortment of characters serves as threadbare masks for a purely personal set of obsessions and intensities. (These impressions are bolstered by *A Rap on Race,* a book of Baldwin's conversations with Margaret Mead, a typical publisher's brainchild.)

By all accounts Baldwin's life has been much entwined with white people and white books; he deeply resisted having his consciousness raised in the direction of separatism. *The Fire Next Time* summarizes his ambivalence even as it burns with the intensity of his anger. Now he is nowhere, an expatriate again, *all* anger — though the lengthening chain of corpses from Malcolm X to George Jackson does much to make his feelings plausible. It is ironic that the man who is partly responsible for the current black mood, or at least prophetic of it, should also fall victim to it. Baldwin's later essays become very harsh, and powerfully anticipate the antiintegrationist militance that developed in the mid-sixties. "Do I really *want* to be integrated into a burning house?" he asked in *The Fire Next Time.* Earlier, in 1961, he summed up his message by saying that "to be a Negro in this country and to be relatively conscious, is to be in a rage all the time." But for Baldwin that rage was a torment and an anguish; he quickly added that "the first problem is how to control that rage so it won't destroy you." For the angry young blacks of the sixties, who perhaps avoided the worst scars that Baldwin and Wright received so early, rage is their pride and power, not a poison at the wellspring. Thus the paradox that while Baldwin has rehashed and flattened what was once a richly complicated, ironic view of the race problem in America, partly out of a desperate attempt to keep abreast of the new mood, younger black writers regularly define their own positions by attacking him, much as he once attacked Richard Wright.

Two of the most severe and damaging assaults, both by writers not simply envious of his fame but deeply involved with his work,

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came from Eldridge Cleaver in *Soul on Ice* and Calvin C. Hernton in the first issue of *Amistad*. They are a good index to the sensibility that, for better or worse, displaced him as a representative figure. Significantly, both couple their attacks on Baldwin with extravagant praise of Richard Wright. Cleaver's simpler charge, already mentioned, is that his work, especially as compared with Wright's, is "void of a political, economic, or even a social reference." Paul Goodman said something similar in his unfavorable review of *Another Country*. This is much more true of the novels than the essays, and least true of *Nobody Knows My Name* (1961), the more public and journalistic collection, which once seemed a paler echo of *Notes of a Native Son* but now seems impressively direct and referential.

It might be noted in passing that Ralph Ellison is hardly vulnerable to Cleaver's charge, though his political views are undoubtedly more repugnant to Cleaver and Hernton than Baldwin's are. Though Ellison shares some of the fifties mystique of identity and personality — as evident in the "invisibility" theme of the novel, which particularly mars the prologue and the very tedious epilogue — he, himself, born in 1914, is almost as much a child of the thirties as Wright.

If *Invisible Man* begins in ripe Southern Gothic on the order of, say, Flannery O'Connor's *Wise Blood,* it matures unexpectedly in the Brotherhood sections into a first-rate political novel. Irving Howe, in one of the few missteps in his commendable essay "Black Boys and Native Sons," complains that this part of the book "does not quite ring true." I find it a brilliant success, done with something like a Dickensian freedom and accuracy of caricature. Howe stumbles, I think, on Ellison's method. One can't of course "refute" the CP by inventing a leader with a slippery glass eye — unless you are Dickens, or Ellison, and are dealing with an organization that was evidently more Kafkaesque than functional. In any case, Ellison's refutation is more convincing than all the labored anti-Communist polemics that run through Harold Cruse's idiosyncratic but indispensable book *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*. The two books together should be enough to convince anyone too young to remember that the Party was probably the worst thing that ever happened to American radicalism.

The crucial charge against Baldwin has little to do with his

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politics, or his literary craftsmanship or even, for that matter, his precise position on the race question. The argument is that Baldwin's homosexuality, his unconfident masculinity, is the hidden root of all his writing and completely disqualifies him as representative spokesman. Cleaver and Hernton speak for an aggressive new generation, bursting with phallic pride and masculine assertiveness, contemptuous of fags (and women?), certain of its identity however much that may threaten the white world. But white America loves Baldwin because he is spineless and effeminate and "does not symbolize the historic fear of the great, black phallus which lurks to rape and pillage," while Wright "was perceived as a powerful, black phallus, threatening their guilt-ridden, lily-white world (Hernton)." "Baldwin's essay on Richard Wright reveals that he despised — not Richard Wright, but his masculinity. He cannot confront the stud in others — except that he must either submit to it or destroy it. And he was not about to bow to a *black* man (Cleaver)."

These charges are malicious and exaggerated but they hit home, and reveal the defects of Baldwin's strengths, the *mauvaise foi* near the heart of his abstract eloquence. Baldwin's great theme, after all, is not the physical or social oppression involved in being black, but the psychological burden. He told how he, a black man, had been taught insidiously to internalize the white man's view of himself, to hate his own skin and people, and hence to feel precarious, uprooted, in his identity and masculinity. He wrote of the powerlessness of black fathers in the face of The Man, and of his own confused search for father and model. How unbearably poignant, then, that he, the black man, so cruelly undermined, should remain the mythical phallus, the object of the deepest sexual fantasies and expectations of white people. But in presenting himself as a representative figure, almost a generalized historical consciousness, he failed to deal candidly with his own homosexuality.

There is indeed a distinct but masked sexual animus in Baldwin's early essays, especially in the essays on Wright, where Baldwin repeatedly describes Bigger Thomas as "a monster created by the American republic," a ghetto rat, a doomed figure of pity and terror. This account, echoed by other critics, is false to the tone and substance of the book. Wright portrays Bigger as a kind of symbolic time bomb that goes off, and finally something of an existential hero,

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never the sort of repulsive figure Baldwin describes. One blatantly wrong sentence especially stunned me as I reread Baldwin; it misses a good deal more than Wright's tone or intention. "All of Bigger's life," says Baldwin, "is controlled, is defined by his hatred and his fear. And later, his fear drives him to murder and his hatred to rape." The fact is that Bigger, though briefly tempted, never commits rape in the novel. Not without sexual overtones he kills Mary Dalton instead, but strictly by accident. It is only the white world — press, prosecutors and public — that universally assumes both rape and deliberate murder, and since Bigger in his panic has destroyed the body, he never manages to prove otherwise. Baldwin's hostility to Bigger, his horror at the violent street nigger, causes him unconsciously to take over the white man's perspective, to project the same sexual fantasies that he debunks so brilliantly when they are applied to himself. Cleaver, for his part, is even more eager to sexualize Wright's characters than Baldwin: he and his contemporaries are determined to reclaim the very myths that Baldwin did so much to question. To Cleaver the Negro homosexual is a historical interlude, an aberration, a disease. He comes forward as the proud black stud, the verification of the myth, the fantasy made real. One recalls with a jolt that Cleaver began his career as a rapist, "an insurrectionary act" he calls it in *Soul on Ice,* a book which at its best enacts his conversion to other, more humane forms of insurrection.

It was Cleaver's book that occasioned Richard Gilman's controversial essays, which discerned — in Cleaver, in Malcolm X, in Fanon — a new mode of writing not simply by blacks but of them and for them, standing outside the white tradition and its audience. The aim of these books, as he saw it, was not the production of literature but the creation of new myths, the production of new modes of consciousness. But Gilman's refusal to judge, his stance of silent wonderment, caused him to patronize somewhat what Cleaver was actually saying, a luxury which blacks themselves, especially black writers, have not been able to afford. All have been marked in some way by the new consciousness. The wheel of black culture has been turning rapidly, however, and in the three years since Gilman wrote a whole new generation of writers has emerged, a fourth generation, so to speak, that seems to me almost as distinct from Cleaver and Malcolm X as they are from Baldwin, as he was from Wright.

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These writers have for the most part returned to traditional genres, especially fiction; they are private persons rather than would-be ideologues, and must grapple with an assortment of problems, both human and technical, which were not central for Cleaver, Malcolm or Fanon.

To say that these writers have begun to return, by the grandfather principle, to the example of Baldwin, would be premature; some have, but they are a various lot. All have been baptized in the issues raised by the tension between Baldwin's work, still very vivid, and Cleaver's or Malcolm X's; all are responsive to the increasing predominance of black nationalist ideas among Negro intellectuals, and to the general cultural ferment of the sixties, which in fiction has opened the door to a diversity of technique and a freedom of expression unparalleled since the early modernist period. What these writers share is a sense of historical and personal grievance, and a willingness to take their blackness as the starting point of their writing; there is no Eliotic escape into form. Chosen by circumstance to bear privileged witness, they carry the mana of survival, the honors and burdens of election, and exude the thrill of newly articulate speech. Toward whites they are invariably hostile or pitying, not at the behest of ideology but as if released by it, reveling in a long-suppressed passion of execration. But they show little impulse to sentimentalize blacks, and they heap satirical venom on the life style of the black middle class. They pay for their one-dimensional anger, as Richard Wright did, by being unable to represent white characters convincingly; they are cut off from the residual humanity of the oppressor, from the whole shape of his malevolence, even his very ordinariness.

Among older writers Baldwin was exceptional in his feel for the reality of the other side — the important Baldwin, I mean, not the recent hysterical one — and it is James Alan McPherson, the most Baldwinesque of the newcomers, who is a partial exception in the younger generation. His excellent book of stories, *Hue and Cry* (1969), and Toni Morrison's novel, *The Bluest Eye* (1970), bring to mind virtues that my account of Baldwin may have obscured. Relatively conventional in form, straightforward in style, both McPherson and Morrison are anatomists of the nuance and feel of personal relationship. Their characters are children (or, grown-ups as vulnerable

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and complex as children) who grow and learn, or fail to, who experience love and unhappiness, brutality and special grace, all without disturbing the cosmos or the body politic. These writers resume the fifties' concern with identity in a new and fresher tone. I'm reminded that if Baldwin's "we" sometimes wobbles in the early essays, enacting his predicament by assuming now a white, now a black face, yet the brilliance of his introspection is directly indebted to that fluid and infirm sense of himself, and to a literary tradition and prose style that nurtured psychological complexity. Add to that his tormented, ambiguous sexuality, which made for further complications of awareness and affect — though it would be invidious to call his emotional sensitivity "feminine." But later blacks, proclaiming their masculinity, would aim to turn identity from a personal problem into a function of group solidarity. Such a project has some meaning for blacks, or for women, who do suffer common disabilities, but it tends to confuse identity with power, or absolution, or pride, all of which groups can more readily bestow.

The continuing "relevance" of Baldwin's books, then, especially the three volumes of essays, lies not in their eloquence, which no other black writer has achieved, but in their vigorous dissent from a cultural mood that excessively devalues inwardness. So too McPherson's stories are a bold evasion of the stereotypes of black militance and "black writing." His central characters are plagued by personal and sexual uncertainties similar to those we find in Baldwin. They are heterosexual, but just barely; intellectual, but not very assuredly; black, but not convinced of their superiority or their exemption from ordinary human needs. They are set off against other figures more firmly if not more happily implanted: half-demented black racists, assured cocksmen, confirmed homosexuals. The stories usually end unhappily. Either the hero is weak and falls under the domination of one of these predators, or he arms himself and casts them out until, eschewing all relationship, all human risk, he becomes an empty shell.

McPherson's stories are the opposite of protest literature. They are built on a principle of reversal by which the victim, apparent object of aggression, turns out to be most deeply victimizing himself. Often these reversals do not quite come off and the stories become

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a little arbitrary as they freeze into their final tableaux, but three or four of the stories are first-rate, especially "Of Cabbages and Kings" and "All the Lonely People," where McPherson shows his facility at choreographing his characters almost diagrammatically around the uncertain figure at the center. Best of all is "Hue and Cry," a 45-page tour de force and surely one of the best stories of the sixties. There the main character is a woman, sensitive, intelligent, full of possibility. She is dragged down in a terrible round robin of mistakes and misfortunes in love, described in tones of sardonic understatement and controlled irony or pathos that are virtually unique in black writing.

Toni Morrison shares McPherson's emotional intelligence and some of his irony as well, particularly when she writes of the black middle class. The first third of her novel is shaky, but when she undertakes, quite tangentially, a sketch of a certain type of Negro woman, destructive, respectable, unfunky, self-hating — a "plain brown girl" who "will build her nest stick by stick, make it her own inviolable world" — the whole novel comes alive and stays that way. Morrison values all the "funkiness" that this girl tries to extirpate, using that word to signify not only physicality but feeling, "the dreadful funkiness of passion, the funkiness of nature, the funkiness of the wide range of human emotions." Clearly black anger is not the province of the black man alone; and like Cleaver, Morrison is as much distressed by a sexual model as a racial one. But finally as a novelist it is a human model that she satirizes or embraces, all in rich if not loving detail.

At the other end of this spectrum are writers whose deepest commitment is to ideology rather than to literature, even as they insist they are really creating a new black aesthetic. This is the position of Larry Neal, a disciple of LeRoi Jones, in a 1968 manifesto called "The Black Arts Movement." According to Neal, "the Western aesthetic has run its course: it is impossible to create anything meaningful within its decaying structure." Going one up on the Baldwin–Wright controversy, he condemns all black literature that is not essentially ethnic, that uses established forms and techniques, that does not speak exclusively to black people, as " 'protest' literature . . . an appeal to white morality." Poetry must be the handmaiden of Black

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Power, a missile in the hand of the Revolution, "a concrete function, an action." Jones himself sums it up best in lines Neal explicates approvingly:

> *We want poems*
> *like fists beating niggers out of Jocks*
> *or dagger-poems in the slimy bellies*
> *of the owner-jews . . .*

(Bad poems might even be better than good ones, for such delicate uses: "Another bad poem cracking / steel knuckles in a jewlady's mouth.") Since such anti-Semitic ranting makes it impossible to think about the poems as literature they need not concern us here, any more than the action-poems they describe, except as a point on the compass. The novelist Cecil Brown does belong to literature, but since, like others of his generation, he is attracted to that point, his work brings into focus the crucial conflict between art and commitment.

The Life and Loves of Mr. Jiveass Nigger, published in 1969, is not a very good novel by conventional standards. The plot is loose and perfunctory; no character is quite as real as the hero, who seems to be a somewhat fantasized version of the author; the occasional leaps into big thinking fall flat. By the same standards Ishmael Reed's two books, *The Free-Lance Pallbearers* (1967) and *Yellow Back Radio Broke-Down* (1969), which are far freer in form, don't qualify as anything at all conventionally; they are really antinovels, and probably wouldn't have gotten published ten years earlier. In the interim the sixties did much to undermine traditional standards, and fostered some wild and inventive alternatives to the well-made art novel, some merely self-indulgent, others genuinely rich in new modes of perception and behavior. In that sense both Brown and Reed owe more to the sixties than they do to other black writers, just as Baldwin belonged intrinsically to the postwar period and Wright to the thirties. Whatever they share of Wright's aggressive militance has little to do with his politics or his defining sensibility. In a reminiscence, Saunders Redding describes how Wright always burned with "zeal for a cause. . . . He never seemed to believe that an attitude toward life that was lighted by the faintest ray of hedonism could be quite real and legitimate. . . . He could only just tolerate . . . the people to whom life is a joke, and not an ironic joke."

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Here is the nub of uniqueness in the emerging generation of black writers, for Brown and Reed combine the self-assertive militance of the sixties with the hedonism and jokery of the same period — with surreal effect in Reed's case, with *Portnoy*-like lubricity in Brown's. Reed's work is a cross between the satirical lunacy of a Terry Southern and the free-swinging verbal exuberance of an Ellison. His basic medium is the sick joke, through which he strings together a phantasmagoric pastiche of American culture that is so intent on being outrageous it finally becomes incoherent. Reed himself calls his books "circuses," and includes in his second book a mock dialogue with a "neo-social realist" who calls him a "crazy dada nigger," dismisses his work as "far out esoteric bullshit," and tells him that "all art must be for the end of liberating the masses." Reed, for his part, insists on an anarchic pluralism of artistic ends and styles; his own Marxism is of the Groucho and Harpo variety. Similarly, Brown has written a piece for the *Black Review* on pop singer James Brown, whose politics are anathema to the militants. The message is D. H. Lawrence's — trust the tale, not the teller; it is a sharp rebuff to the would-be cultural commissars who apply a political test to artists and art — ideologues, he says, who could not themselves create a single poem, story or song.

Such an unexpected defense of the autonomy and worth of art is more than a straw in the wind; it is close to a manifesto. So is his freewheeling attack on *Native Son* early in his own novel, where his hero inverts Baldwin's complaint by blaming Bigger Thomas for *not* screwing Mary Dalton, dismissing "all those stupid ass Biggers who think violence is sex, who don't have enough cool to seduce a 'white' woman but who end up *stealing* a kiss from a 'white' girl when he should have fucked her, fucked her so good she would have gotten a glimpse into the immortal soul of the universe and come away from it all a changed woman, fucked her so beautifully that she would come away feeling he was a man, that his fucking (his humanity) had brought out that core of goodness which is in the worst of thieves." There are echoes of both Cleaver and, surprisingly, Baldwin here, but the presiding genius is none other than Norman Mailer. The white Negro comes home to roost; the stud-redeemer of "The Time of Her Time" and *An American Dream* comes strutting out in black face. If Cleaver and Hernton sexualize Bigger Thomas into a walking

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phallus, for Brown he is limp and inadequate. He says of his own hero that "he could relate to Julien Sorel, to Tom Jones; he could relate to the nigger in Malcolm X, LeRoi Jones, James Baldwin, and Eldridge Cleaver. . . . But he could not relate to Bigger. He could not relate to stupidity, fear, and demoralization."

Who is Mr. Jiveass Nigger that he is so far beyond the demoralization of the ghetto, so exempt from human weakness? The book worries that question, taking us back circuitously to the problems of identity that plague other black writers. Brown's hero is an American expatriate in Copenhagen with the mock-patriotic name of George Washington, which is as good as having no name at all. He rarely uses the name though, for he lies compulsively and assumes a variety of spontaneous identities through which he puts on and cons almost everyone he meets, especially white women. This is his "jive," about which he theorizes endlessly, insisting that "there was nothing under the sun that was really phony if it was functional." George is a Portnoy in reverse, burdened not by excessive moral feelings but by their absence, not by sexual inhibition but by utter sexual facility. He is the Julien Sorel of the color line, a Tom Jones who exploits his anonymity. His solution to the problem of identity is to live without one, or with many, which turns out to be the same thing. George is another version of a figure that has long flourished in black writing, in Jewish writing, in the folklore of many beleaguered cultures: the trickster-hero, confidence man, king of schnorrers, the virtuoso of survival. He is the antitype of Bigger Thomas, the victim-aggressor of protest literature, the alienated hero who confronts society head on and conquers or is destroyed. The trickster is everywhere at home, always able to land on his feet, as different from Bigger as Falstaff is from Hotspur. Probably the best such figure is Rinehart, the man of many roles whose brilliant nonappearance all over Harlem clinches the argument of *Invisible Man*. But Ellison finally judges against Rinehart, and would later call him "the personification of chaos . . . who has lived so long with chaos he knows how to manipulate it." Manipulate it but not change it, or himself. And Brown's hero finally judges against himself and renounces his game, discovering at the end that "everybody in this town, every black person, seems to be living off someone or something else. Everything but their insides. Black men fancy themselves potent when they can flatter themselves

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to be gigolos." He goes home to America to try to live off his own insides, and by doing so he sharply delimits the wisdom of his early attack on Bigger, with its brash equation of the black man's "fucking" and his "humanity."

In the process both book and character become perhaps more serious than the author intended. One imagines that Brown's own "jive" was to write a sex novel, to put on public and publishers as well. This is all they want, says George, "and if you say something about sex and being a nigger then you got a bestseller." I don't know about his sales, but Brown happens to write very well about sex. Steeped as much in Miller as in Mailer, not only for sex but for the whole expatriate ambiance, he can be very funny about it. But in the end the jive and exploitation catch up with Brown, as with George, and the novel becomes serious in spite of itself. Of course it's possible that this reversal is also a put-on — for critics like me who are hot for meaning. Brown jokes bitterly about this in an epilogue. So what. That too is part of the meaning, and like the sex part, it works. Brown is a deeply conflicted writer, despite the surface brashness, and he gives George to imagine various books he'd rather have written than this one. Such as a book with a real stick of dynamite in it, to be acclaimed by the *Saturday Review* as "a searing blast from the depths . . . slashing . . . dynamite," and then actually to blow up in the reader's face. Or else a 700-page book, every page empty but for the words KISS MY BLACK ASS, with a footnote reading MY BLACK BALLS TOO, and a preface by Marshall McLuhan saying, "White America: I ask you to kiss this black ass." Brown hasn't written those books, but they are part of the knife-edged comedy, part of the meaning, of the one he actually has written. "I won't mind writing a book," says George, summing up his quandary, "but I'd hate to be a black author in America."

I'm not sure why Brown's fantasies evoke in me little of the disgust and aversion I feel for those of LeRoi Jones. Probably the word "jew" is crucial, the literal threat, the humorless viciousness of Jones's impulses, which lean consciously on a pogrom psychology and reveal a truly sadistic, kamikaze mentality. Brown by comparison is coining dada jokes, doing a verbal turn, not making a statement of intent. He remains an artist, flailing himself for the limitations of his role, enacting his own inner conflict. Jones and Neal scorn inwardness as a

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sterile remnant of bourgeois individualism; they envision an artist who will become an impersonal emanation of the *Volk*. Brown's novel, and Cain's *Blueschild Baby*, both of which are drenched in militant anger, also fulfill Whitman's boast that if you touch this book you touch a man. Both are full of human density and human contradiction — both are works of art, in other words — and much as they may finally preach what Cruse calls "black-skin chauvinism," they do so only as an end-point in a process of self-discovery, only rarely bending their immediate perceptions to fit the frame of their finally raised consciousness.

Let me illustrate this briefly. Both writers follow Cleaver in depicting the black man as stud and sexual athlete, as the avenger at once exploiting and redeeming white flesh. Cain says of his white activist girl friend, "She lived in the dead yesterday of news reports or the tomorrow of reform. The pressing moment never intruded till I came and drove her into life." Two pages later he adds, "I was amazed that she could have opinions and attitudes about everything and still hadn't fulfilled her primary function. I made her into a woman to meet my needs." This is absurd, more sexist than racist, but it is not where these writers are going; it's just this sort of relationship that Brown and Cain show their characters growing away from as they discover that being used and using others are interchangeable, that they must learn to live off their own insides. "Everyone but me had a piece of George Cain. Was no longer me, but a composite of all their needs and desires." The healthiest side of black separatism is the return not just to group solidarity but to one's own head. When Cain discovers that whites, all whites, are as ugly as he had once thought them attractive, he is simply inverting a racist stereotype. But doing so helps convince him that "The Man can't free me. I must free myself." Like Brown he finds that the sexual myths he had exploited had also exploited and devalued him. When he finally comes back to the black girl who had waited patiently during his *Wanderjahre* in the white world, in prison, on dope, he makes contact without a touch of bravado, with affecting anxiety and humility: "Am afraid to sleep with Nandy, make love to her. . . . Have been with only white women where I enjoyed the advantage of the myths each of us brought to bed. . . . Have never come to a

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woman naked and defenseless, just a man. Am ashamed I know nothing of black women."

One can see that Cain, like Wright in *Black Boy,* means to shape his life into parable — a sermon to the ghetto kids against junk, a preachment against interracial sex. We have long been told that such didacticism is impure, an artistic flaw. Baldwin spoke for what has since become a vast critical consensus when he insisted that ideological purpose was inconsistent with art, that it was hostile to the representation of full human realities. But here is Cain breaking the rules, acknowledging no line between fiction and autobiography, preaching and teaching, and in the end being neither myth nor stereotype but "just a man."

Not long ago Ralph Ellison lashed out at "talented but misguided writers of Negro American cultural background . . . who regard their social predicament as Negroes as exempting them from the necessity of mastering the craft and forms of fiction." But surely the author of *Invisible Man,* that wildly eclectic, impure and rambunctious work, knows that blackness is more than a "cultural background" or a "social predicament," knows that the rules of fiction can hardly be enumerated, let alone rigidly applied; that form does not dwell majestically alone, like Shelley's Mont Blanc, apart from immediate experience. In the sixties, literary form renewed itself under the pressures of new experience, of fantasy, of verbal experiment, of politics, and in the process became boldly impure. This new impurity, which some see as a liberating openness and others call formlessness and decadence, has apparently meshed well with the contradictions of being a black American today. It has fostered an exceptionally interesting range of writers, who may help find a new solution to the problem of literature and ideology, a solution in which literature is by no means abolished, and ideology is humanized.

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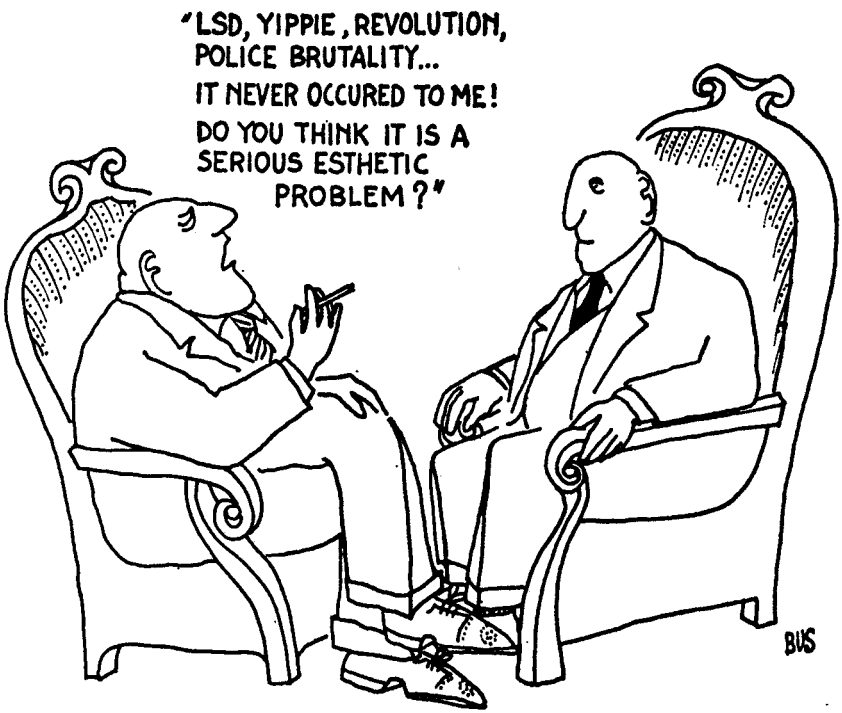
A DRAWING

by

BUS



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Herbert Marcuse

A REPLY TO LUCIEN GOLDMANN

I was most reluctant to accept the editor's invitation to comment on Lucien Goldmann's paper (*PR,* No. 3, 1971). Goldmann was a close friend of mine for many years; I still cannot come to grips with the brute fact of his death. Reading his paper, I got quite angry; I felt he was still alive, I was talking to him and, as so often, I disagreed passionately with what he said. And I felt that again, we embraced each other and knew we were on the same side.

My brief comments will be in self-defense: Goldmann belongs to those before whom I want to defend myself. I shall comment only on a few points.

1. Goldmann says that, in my view, "Western society has been so stabilized that no serious opposition can be found within it." Now it is correct that *One-Dimensional Man* focuses on the integrating forces of monopoly capitalism at its advanced stage. I still believe that without a realistic evaluation of these forces, no Marxist analysis and no leftist strategy can be adequate. However, I emphasized again and again that, beneath this integration, the internal contradictions of capitalism have reached an unprecedented scope and intensity. This is the conclusion of *One-Dimensional Man:* ". . . the unification of opposites in the medium of technological rationality must be, *in all reality,* an illusory unification which eliminates neither the contradiction between the growing productivity and its repressive use, nor the vital need for solving the contradiction" (p. 256).[1] I added that a radical opposition is there, but that it

1. *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964).

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appears in forms and modes very different from those germane to previous phases of the revolutionary socialist movement.

My main effort since has been to explicate this difference in the new radical potential, and to understand it in terms of the structural changes under monopoly capitalism. Today, I would summarize the situation in the USA roughly as follows.

At the attained stage of the development, the socialist revolution appears imperative: the alternative is a protracted period of barbarism. In its scope and its goals, the revolution would be larger and more radical than the preceding ones. The potential for it exists — therefore the preventive counterrevolution on a global scale. The counterrevolution, not the revolution, is on the agenda.

And yet, the forces making for the collapse of the established social system are there, and we can identify them if we recognize that the traditional pattern of revolution is no longer valid. This was a revolution based on the industrial proletariat and aiming at the "seizure of power" on a national scale, directed by centralized mass parties. The new pattern derives from changes in the structure of capitalism within the framework of capitalism. They appear in the extension of the direct rule of capital over formerly (relatively) independent strata of the population (mainly among the middle classes), in the altered composition of the working class (now including an increasing proportion of white-collar workers) and in the vital role of the intelligentsia in the reproduction of (and in the fight against) the capitalist system. Behind the facade of the "consumer society," the base of exploitation is greatly enlarged.

Revolution at a high standard of living? The consumer society may well become the grave digger of capitalism. Marx thought that capitalism had fulfilled its "historical destiny" when it has satisfied the basic needs of the people, and when "surplus labor beyond the necessities has itself become a universal need, generated by the individual needs themselves. . . ."[2] This implies radically new impulses of revolution. Capitalism constantly creates needs (must create needs) which it cannot satisfy within its own framework — *transcending* needs. It is only at the most advanced stage of capitalism, and on

2. *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Oekonomie* (Berlin: Dietz, 1953), p. 231. See Martin Nicholaus's comments on this passage in *New Left Review* 48 (1968).

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the ground of the *satisfaction* of basic needs, that transcending needs drive beyond the capitalist mode of production: reduction and eventual elimination of alienated labor; self-determination as the new way of life; new relationships between men and women, between the generations, between man and nature. In short: socialism as a *qualitatively* different society.

I tried to develop this thesis in a forthcoming book. Here, I only sketch it in order to show that I do envisage the "opening" and disintegration of the one-dimensional society. I believe that a Marxist evaluation of the disintegrating forces calls for a reexamination which would restore the dialectical character of the Marxian concepts as against their pseudoorthodox ritualization and fetishization. The Marxian concepts are, as dialectical concepts, historical ones; so is their object, the capitalist society as a whole. Their dialectical historical character demands the development of their content in accord with, and in contradiction to, the actual development of society. Such a theoretical development must, in order to be dialectical, derive the new stage from the preceding one, thus retaining the intent and impetus of the original concept.

2. The second point I want to take up is Goldmann's designation of my analysis as "elitist," culminating in the notion of a dictatorship of philosophers or sages. In the postscript to *Repressive Tolerance* I said: "the alternative to the established semi-democratic process is not a dictatorship or elite, no matter how intellectual and intelligent, but the struggle for a real democracy" (p. 122)[3] — which, in my view, can only be a socialist democracy. Until this struggle is won, until a revolutionary situation arises, the main task will be radical political education in theory and practice, to combat the counterrevolution and to arouse the consciousness of the integrated majority. This task would, quite logically, be incumbent on nonintegrated minority groups, mainly among the young (workers and intelligentsia, black and white). The socialist revolution can only be carried by the majority of the people — this is a cornerstone of Marxist theory. However, such a majority does not yet exist. Monopoly capital still has its large popular base; the capitalist dynamic

3. Robert P. Wolff, Barrington Moore, Jr., Herbert Marcuse, *A Critique of Pure Tolerance* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969).

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will undermine this base, but it can become a potentially socialist base only in the process of political education — otherwise, the potential may well be a fascist one.

In the activation of the leftist potential, the student movement has played, and will continue to play, a decisive role. If this is "elitism," I gladly confess to it. Of all the dangers threatening the movement from within, perhaps the greatest is the widespread anti-intellectualism, the inferiority complex of not being "a worker" (another aspect of the stifling ritualization of Marxian theory!), the guilt feeling of being "privileged." This masochistic antiintellectualism is not only a gift to the establishment (which fosters and practices antiintellectualism) but also an insult to all these students who were assassinated or who risked their life and liberty in the militant protest, in this country and abroad. Today, students are in the forefront of the struggle: from Japan to Vietnam to Bengal; to the African countries which liquidate "communists" by the thousands; to Brazil, Bolivia, Mexico, the Philippines. Where students are not massacred, they are bombed, poisoned, jailed. The powers that be know who the enemy is, and where to strike. . . .

3. Goldmann says that in my writings there is "a sharp but not dialectical opposition between oppression and liberty, the existing and the ideal, the empirical and the rational, the given and the utopian. . . ." I admit the opposition between oppression and liberty, but I believe it is a dialectical one. Between the established and the free society, there is a rupture, and the revolution is a qualitative leap: the leap into essentially new ways of life, with new needs and values. The only historical continuity which is more than a quantitative (technical) one is in the chance that the men and women with the new intelligence and sensibility, the men and women who will make the revolution, grow up *within the old* society.

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POEMS

IN LIQUID MOONLIGHT

For minutes long as damp fields
I watch a snail
swim slowly its clear glue
onto
over the length of a blade of grass

off
& the blade, flattened
in its glistening bond

shudders

begins now to
bow
upwards

pulling
the elastic clear muscle
to a single
web
of light

breaks free!

a sphere

in space

& its lucid
single
thought

whispers

me

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SOMETHING FAMILIAR

You are 72 years old
and the car you are driving
is an island
that everywhere leans
toward you

there are no birds
but the air is full
a tepid bath
about your limbs

you think you have been sleeping
and wonder slowly
if you have missed
a favorite cast of sun through leaves
or a face

it's your neighborhood
you've been passing, and here
someone would know you
some hand might wave
from the haze

you go slowly, and it's warm
and you're sure there is someone

but you can't remember who.

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LIZARD

Stopped and awful as a photograph
of somebody laughing,
But ten years dead.—SYLVIA PLATH

It was you in the photo
the one Jamesy took
that blithe day
at the beach. The moment after
I think
when you held the gull's bones
in the salt spray above your head
for us to see — the rib-caught leaves
tiny flags flapping
on their tethers.

"I thought it was a lizard," you said.
"Alive!"
And laughed
into the still freeze
of a photograph,
your long red hair still ruffled
by the scream.

James Bertolino

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Marshall Berman

NOTES TOWARD A NEW SOCIETY

One of the most intense and most disturbing arguments on the left in the late sixties has been over the possibilities of modern man creating a decent society. The New Left has put the question this way: can a socialist revolution be made *by* Western men, or *along with* them, or *apart from* them, or only *against* them? The real question is: is there any hope for us? Radicals of the sixties have forced this question to the surface in every advanced industrial country. It has taken on a special urgency in the USA.

The responses of the American New Left have been shaky and ambiguous; they have exposed the cracks and strains at its foundations. On the one hand, the most vital impulse of New Left activity has always been populistic, driven by a characteristically American faith in everyday people, a faith that, for all the inequities in American society and the oppressive acts of the American government internationally, the American people themselves are still a source of decency and hope. This is the faith that has inspired the continuing drive for participatory democracy and community control. On the New Left itself this faith has clashed with a darker view of "the people."

The main left-wing idea of "the people" is formulated most systematically by Herbert Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man.* " 'The people,' " Marcuse argues there, "previously the ferment of social change, have 'moved up' to become the ferment of social cohesion." Thus, "The people recognize themselves in their commodities; they find their soul in their automobile, hi-fi set, split-level home, kitchen equipment. . . . The political needs of society become individual needs and aspirations. . . ." The people within our society identify

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themselves totally, singlemindedly, with its ruling aims and values; between them and it falls no shadow. This is why it is legitimate to call them "one-dimensional." Now it is obvious that people like these will be unable, by either inclination or insight, to liberate either their slaves or themselves. If hope for human freedom and happiness depended on these one-dimensional men, it would be a lost cause. But this is not the whole story. For, according to Marcuse, even in America, there is more to the human race than is dreamt of in their dimension:

> . . . underneath the conservative popular base is the substratum of outcasts and outsiders, the exploited and persecuted of other races and other colors, the unemployed and the unemployable. They exist outside the democratic process; [they feel] . . . the most immediate and the most real need for ending intolerable conditions and institutions. Thus their opposition is revolutionary even if their consciousness is not. Their opposition hits the system from without and is therefore not deflected by the system; it is an elementary force which violates the rules of the game, and, in doing so, reveals it as a rigged game. . . . The fact that they start refusing to play the game may be the fact that marks the beginning of the end of a period.

The American people, and the peoples they control, may yet become free; but the liberating force will have to come, somehow, *from outside,* that is, outside the American system.

It is clear, however, that Marcuse was using the word "outside" in a complex metaphorical way. He did not mean to deny that there could be fruitful contradictions "inside" the American system. His one example of radical action (immediately following the long passage quoted above) involves the civil rights movement: a movement which, when the book appeared in 1964, included whites as well as blacks, middle-class as much as lower-class people, students from the most prestigious universities alongside "the unemployed and the unemployable." In other words, large groups within the American system could, if they tried, get into the revolutionary "outside." One-dimensional men might yet discover — or create — new dimensions in themselves. Of course, once we grant the complexity of Marcuse's idea here, new problems arise. If it is really possible for a great many "insiders" to join the "outside" forces, without giving up their positions within the system, we might wonder whether the inside–outside dualism is a helpful way of talking about social reality.

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Marcuse himself, in his next work, *An Essay on Liberation* (1968), tacitly abandoned this dualistic scheme; but other men, with flatter minds, have kept it alive.

If we move forward from 1964 to 1969, and examine the first Weatherman manifesto, which came out of the great split in SDS, we will find some of the same words, but in what seems like a different world. Marcuse's language and general scheme are retained: a people that is internally monolithic is opposed by radical forces from "outside." But the Marcusean sociology has been transformed into a Manichaean cosmology. The Weathermen take the idea of "outside" force with a crude, grim literalism: the basic opposition is one of geography. "America" is condemned, root and branch, as an "oppressor nation" whose sole source of support is the life and labor of "the peoples of the world." The American oppressors include not only the rich, the owners of wealth and property, the bourgeoisie, but "virtually all of the white working class," blue- and white-collar alike, who enjoy "privileges but very real ones, which give them an edge of vested interests and tie them to the imperialists. . . ." The Weathermen judge *all* white Americans and find them wanting, totally lacking in human potential. It is wrong, they say, for radicals to concentrate on the "internal development of class struggle in this country," wrong to work for better conditions in shops and factories and hospitals, wrong to fight to "reform [the schools] so that they can serve the people," for this kind of action diverts Americans from the central issue: "Imperialism is always the issue." The role American radicalism can play is thus radically restricted:

> . . . the vanguard of the "American Revolution" — that is, the section of the people who are in the forefront of the struggle, and whose class interests and needs define the terms and tasks of the revolution — is the workers and oppressed peoples of the colonies of Asia, Africa and Latin America. . . . The Vietnamese (and the Uruguayans and the Rhodesians) and the blacks and the Third World peoples in this country will continue to set the terms for class struggle in America.

The only Americans for whom there is any hope turn out not really to be Americans at all: "black people," the statement says, "are part of the Third World and part of the international revolutionary vanguard."

Although the Weatherpeople write off all white Americans with

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apparent impartiality, they are especially scornful toward the group from which most of them themselves have come: the literate, educated, white-collar men and women of American metropolitan areas and university towns. This group is not easily defined. Some sociologists classify it as "new middle class," some put it into the "new working class," some say it spans both. What everyone agrees, however, and what is important for my point, is that there is something distinctively "modern" about the group, something endemic to societies that are "advanced," highly "developed" — therefore I will refer to this group as "modern men," as "us." The Weatherpeople take great pains to disaffiliate themselves from us. When they learned "to reject the ideal career of the professional," it did not occur to them to try to create their own career models, or to connect themselves with radical traditions within their own country, their own culture, their own class. What they did was to "look for leadership to the people's war of the Vietnamese," to "look to Mao, Che, the Panthers, the Third World, for models, for motion." The closest the Weatherpeople are willing to come to home is "the 'people's culture' of black America," which they have learned from "Chuck Berry, Elvis, The Temptations." It does not seem even to occur to them — they never mention the idea, not even to dismiss it — that anything further might be happening here. (The radical potential which they concede to "youth culture" seems to consist entirely in its capacity to identify with radical forces "outside.") If they speak to us at all, it is only to give us notice that our "television set, car and wardrobe already belong . . . to the people of the world." Until the repossessors arrive, the one worthy thing we can do is "support the blacks in moving as fast as they have to and are able to, and . . . keep up with that black movement enough so that white revolutionaries can share the cost, and the blacks don't have to do the whole thing alone." In other words, we can serve as a sort of Fifth Column for the Third World: but not for ourselves — since we're not worth saving. Our role, our historic mission, is to be overcome someday.

When the great day comes, none of us will get to share in its fruits. Liberation for the world will mean only repression for us. According to the late Ted Gold, after American imperialism is defeated abroad, "an agency of the peoples of the world" will be set up to run the American economy and society, presumably to give

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our television sets, cars and clothes back to their rightful owners. Africans, Peruvians, Vietnamese will move in and take over — making every John Bircher's worst dreams come true. Indeed, said Gold, in his last published words before his tragic death, "if it will take fascism, we'll have to have fascism." Americans are so innately, irreparably, radically evil, that "it will take fascism" — the twentieth century's realest vision of hell on earth — to give us our just deserts. And the handwriting on our palace walls is just as clear as the words over the gate of the Inferno: all of us must abandon all hope for ourselves.

When the Weatherpeople burst on the scene in the summer of 1969, their manifesto stirred a storm of bitter invective on the left. What seemed most outrageous about them — even more than the terrorist tactics they were to develop a few months later — was their overwrought self-hatred, at once personal, racial and cultural. Critics with a sense of irony were quick to pick up echoes of that old reliable "liberal guilt." But there were greater ironies which no one was ready to confront. This guilt trip, sick as it was, struck a deeper chord in a great many radicals' sensibilities than they cared to admit. For the Weatherpeople were only working out, to its absurdly logical conclusion, that idea of the American people as "one-dimensional" which most American radicals had accepted uncritically for years. By taking it seriously — dead seriously — the Weatherpeople made it plain to all of us how cruel, how antihuman an idea it was. But none of us on the left had a clear alternative. If the mass of the American people, if "modern men" as a class, were not one-dimensionally evil, exactly what were they — or, rather, what were we? Everyone was embarrassed because no one could say. Hence the critiques of Weathermen, as illuminating as they are, all have a curiously hollow ring. There is an emptiness at the center, where an idea should be. What's missing is a theory of the American people — and more, a theory of "modern" people, of the men and women whom highly developed societies create; a theory of the tensions and contradictions in the life we live, of our strengths and limitations, of our hidden capacities and potentialities.

To try to fill this vacuum, we must go back to the beginning of the modern age. For the peculiar emptiness that afflicts the New

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Left is close to the very center of the life and experience of "modern man" as such. Ever since the first modern societies began to take on a distinctive form, and people like us emerged in their midst, one of our deepest drives has been *to get outside ourselves.* So much of the paraphernalia of the sixties — from beads to psychedelic drugs to sentimental idealizations of the "Third World" — expresses an archetypical modern impulse: a desperate longing for any world, any culture, any life but our own. This impulse has made the life of modern men and women strangely paradoxical, maybe even absurd, at its core. On the one hand, it has enlarged our sympathies and sensibilities, deepened our feelings, developed our understanding, helped us grow; on the other, it has led us, in affirming other people's lives, to turn against and deny and negate our own. It is only too typically modern that the New Left of the nineteen sixties should gain at once a three-dimensional vision of so many other kinds of people — blacks, Indians, the Third World, women, homosexuals, schizophrenics, and on and on — and a one-dimensional view of themselves. This is only the latest punch line in a sick joke that gives some of the flavor of modern society's sickness, and yet, ironically, manages to express some of its health as well.

To understand the modern predicament, it might be useful to look at Rousseau, for he was the first truly modern radical. Living in the midst of the first great wave of modernization, he was the first radical thinker to address himself directly to the problems springing up in its wake. He was the first to get the jokes that modern men were playing on themselves. Unfortunately, some of Rousseau's radical impulses led him up a blind alley, one which prefigures and may illuminate the impasse in which the New Left is stuck today. But Rousseau also found in himself the insight and imagination to see beyond his impasse, and I believe that those of us on the left may find in him a way to see through — and, hopefully, to break through — our own.

II

Among the many notes in Rousseau's writings that strike close to home, one of the most arresting is the uninhibited rage and violence with which he attacks the modern city, its culture and its people. A typical remark: "In this age of calculators, it's remarkable

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that no one should see that France would be far more powerful if Paris were annihilated." *Burn it down!* Rousseau's tone here is far more typical of the nineteen sixties than of the seventeen sixties. (Typical of the nineteen sixties too, that he should be shocked and perplexed when some Parisians treat him as a menace.) But he insists that his feelings about Paris are nothing personal; he aims his malevolence at the modern city *per se*: "a big city, full of scheming, idle people, without religion or principle, whose imagination, depraved by sloth, inactivity, the love of pleasure, and great needs, engenders only monsters and inspires only crimes. . . ." Thus "Men are not made to be crowded together in antheaps; they should be scattered over the earth which they have to cultivate. The more they gather together, the more they corrupt themselves." We can see here the birth of a distinctively modern apocalyptic language and one-dimensional vision — a language which we survivors of the nineteen sixties have heard, and a vision we have seen, all too well. This language and vision borrow the rhetoric and imagery of Jewish, early Christian and medieval apocalypse, raging against the Great Whore Babylon (an image of which the Black Panthers and their white followers are particularly fond), hoping for its destruction. But the perspective now is secular and post-Christian: these radicals yearn not for a transcendental, purely spiritual redemption, but for a kingdom that will be immanent, material, in and of this world.

In fact, Rousseau's one-dimensional view of the city was only a small part of a much larger one-dimensional picture. He was well aware that, at the very moment he was condemning the "great cities," they were just emerging as the centers of energy in a vast social, political and cultural evolutionary process — a process of development which is still going on today. In condemning them, Rousseau was condemning the *esprit générale* of modern society, and the historical movement that was bringing this society into being.

We can find somewhere in Rousseau's work just about every objection to modern society that anyone has thought of, left, right or center, in the last two hundred years: it is too free, it is not free enough; men are too "levelled," they are too unequal; people cannot get close to each other, they are thrown into intense and indecent intimacy. But Rousseau's most concrete account of his confrontation with modern society is in his romantic and political novel,

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The New Eloise, in which Saint-Preux, the young, sensitive, intellectual hero, who is stifled by the rigid class prejudices and emotional deadness of his native petit-bourgeois provincial society, comes to Paris, in search of a place to which he and his love, Julie, can flee, a social structure into which individualistic and romantic people can be integrated, can build and live a life. Rousseau's treatment of the trip is perhaps the first modern instance of what has since become an archetypical modern theme, both in art and in life: the Young Man from the Provinces Comes to the City. As Lionel Trilling points out, Rousseau himself — "a shiftless boy from Geneva, a starveling and a lackey, who becomes the admiration of the French aristocracy, and is permitted by Europe to manipulate its assumptions in every department of life" — is "the father of all Young Men from the Provinces, including the one from Corsica." Confrontation with the great city, exposure of the self to its promises and perils, is an ultimate test of who a person is, of all that he or she can be.

Saint-Preux is immediately thrilled by the energy and vitality of Paris, the "great spectacles," the "enormous diversity of things," the "many attractions which offer so many charms to the newcomer." The most striking thing about life here is its *fluidity.* He feels himself "thrown into a torrent" that overruns all social barriers, and generates an unprecedented social mobility. Everyone is approachable and accessible; thought and speech in this city lead to *action;* there is a seemingly infinite range of opportunity. "Nothing is shocking, for everyone is accustomed to everything. . . ." No society has ever been more "full of original men," because none has ever opened up so much social space for individuality to develop.

Why should anyone want to burn down a place like this, in which all human potentialities can be fulfilled? This potentiality itself turns out to be the city's greatest pitfall. In an age when individuality has become freer and more important than ever, Rousseau sees nothing more precious, more valuable, than the wholehearted *commitment* of one individual to another. Personal commitment, for him, is what gives romantic love a moral dignity. Indeed, by virtue of its power to generate commitment, romantic love acquires a political dignity as well: the romantic couple is the primary community, the nucleus of the social contract. Earily in *The New Eloise,* after the young lovers have secretly slept together, and pledged themselves to

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one another, Julie is racked with guilt; she considers rejecting the man she loves, and marrying instead the noble lord her father is trying to force on her. But Saint-Preux insists that her guilt is misplaced: their love springs not from immorality, but from a new morality, in which fidelity becomes the highest virtue, a political as well as sexual issue. Lovers must be steadfastly, monogamously devoted to one another, in the same way, and for the same reasons, that the true citizen must be faithfully devoted to his community. Moreover, for lovers and citizens alike, fidelity will be valuable only if it is freely given, given out of "the soul of a free man," given by a person who has the power to withhold it. For modern men and women, in the modern metropolis, at a time when a bourgeois economy and society is just coming to life — in other words, in a world of infinite options — fidelity takes on a unique, irreplaceable human value. Ironically, however, the same social conditions that make free personal commitment possible seem at the same time to make it impossible. This contradiction is what makes Saint-Preux and Rousseau feel that modernity has got to go.

"Everyone," says Saint-Preux, "constantly places himself in contradiction with himself . . . and this opposition doesn't bother anyone" — because self-contradiction is what makes this world go round. But indeed if "nothing is shocking, because everyone is accustomed to everything," doesn't it follow that "everything is absurd"? Amid all these quick changes, what is worth hanging onto? If anything (or anyone) that is here today can be gone tomorrow, what standards can we legitimately use to decide what is right? For that matter, in the great city, do words like legitimate and right have any meaning at all? All the old moral touchstones seem to crumble in this new world. "Of all the things that strike me, none of them holds my heart, but the totality disturbs my heart, and dislocates my feelings, to the point that *I forget what I am and whom I belong to.*" The modern city enables the self to expand its activity enormously; but where is the self to find a center, a core that will hold its identity together? The endless parade of possibilities which modernity presents disturbs the heart, dislocates the feelings, and forces the individual to *choose,* to *decide,* every day, every night, not only where he or she is going to go, whom he or she is going to belong to, but *what he or she is going to be.*

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Paradoxically, the enormous range of possibilities destroys the possibility of a stable, integrated, indissoluble "being" which the self can securely call its own.

When one night Saint-Preux goes to bed with a girl he has met, his hysterical guilt leads him to draw reactionary political conclusions from the sexual politics of the affair — he was led astray by freedom; from now on, he will seek escapes from this ambiguous, dreadful freedom.

The impulse which Saint-Preux blames for his infidelity, and tries to reject in himself, is an impulse which he shares with all modern men, a force that animates them and drives them all, and gives modern society its distinctive form: this is what Rousseau calls *avidité,* "avidity." In the *Social Contract* it will appear as the motive force behind "the turmoil of commerce and the arts, the avid pursuit of profit" — a force which Rousseau considers absolutely incompatible with democracy. Here it appears at the heart of Parisian life, and Saint-Preux condemns it as the real motive for his crime. "They looked at me with *a violent avidity* . . ." — and he looked back. Avidity is linked with avarice, the bourgeois desire for money and profit; but it is a great deal more than avarice. As Rousseau sees and feels it, it can express itself just as well in sexual desire, or in aggressive violence. Indeed, it floats freely between one object and another. This ambiguity is a key to the deeply ambiguous character of the social system it sustains. In modern society, sex, money and violence are hopelessly entangled with one another, need and greed are intertwined, for modern society both liberates impulses and mixes them up, with catastrophic results. What is to be done? From this point, Rousseau went off in two radically opposite directions. Sometimes, as we will see later, he tried to make distinctions, to disentangle the different kinds of avidity, to separate need from greed, creative from destructive energy. At other times, as we have seen already, he saw them all as one, condemned them all, root and branch, and tried to reject modernity as a whole.

The same logic that led Rousseau to despair of Saint-Preux's capacity for fidelity in the modern city also led him to despair of the capacity of modern men for democracy or community. What made them such bad material for democratic citizenship and participation in communal life, Rousseau believed, was their free-floating avidity.

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Every modern people, he said, is "noisy, brilliant and fearsome," "an ardent, avid, ambitious people, . . . given to the two extremes of opulence and poverty (*misère*), of license and slavery." The basic trouble with people like this is that they *can't be counted on*: they are never fully *committed* to anyone or anything except the pursuit of their personal interests. "A prey to indolence and all the passions it excites, they plunge themselves into debauchery, and sell themselves for satisfaction; self-interest makes them servile, and idleness makes them restless; *they are either slaves or rebels, never free men.*"

III

When Rousseau turned away from the great city in search of "love, happiness and innocence," he turned toward those traditional, rural societies in the backwaters and backwoods of Europe (or beyond Europe altogether) not yet affected by the process of modernization. For it was only in undeveloped societies, he often argued, that radical democracy could take root. The impact of Rousseau's thought here has been enormous: we can see his influences on the Russian Narodniks and American Populists of the nineteenth century, and, more recently, on Mao and Fanon and many ideologues of the Third World today.

Rousseau did not think rural societies of his period were fine just as they were: he despised the fashionable pastoral conventions, and saw, as clearly as anyone in his time, the starvation and oppression and misery that choked the countryside. Still, he believed that the very misery of rural life generated human qualities that were indispensable to a democratic citizenry. Peasants know how to endure, to hold on; thus they are "attached to their soil" far more tenaciously than modern men are committed to their cities. The life of the traditional peasant commune is "happy in its mediocrity"; it leaves its members "incapable of even imagining a better way of life." What is striking and disturbing about these views is that they glorify narrowness, rigidity, ignorance, even stupidity — precisely those qualities Marx later stigmatized as "the idiocy of rural life."

One of history's most compelling collective dreams has been that the last shall be first. Rousseau made the dream seem plausible: backward people, he argued, by virtue of their very backwardness, are really able to preserve virtues which advanced peoples have had

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to repress in themselves in order to get ahead. Two centuries of populism, anarchism, socialism and communism have given Rousseau's language an elaborate and complex vocabulary, which we can use to translate his ideas into ideologies of our time. The dream that the last shall be first emerges as the contemporary political theory — or, maybe, political myth — that the undeveloped societies can make the leap from feudalism or colonialism to socialism directly, without having to pass through a capitalist stage.

Rousseau's most fully realized vision of the unmodernized radical democracy occurs in *The New Eloise* when the Swiss mountain community of the Upper Valais is experienced and evaluated for us through the eyes of Saint-Preux. In the structure of the novel, it corresponds to Saint-Preux's evocation of Paris; in the structure of Rousseau's ideas, the Upper Valais is an antithesis to Paris, an archetype of the Rousseauan alternative to modernization. This idyllic society, however, contains inner contradictions of its own, contradictions even more severely destructive than the ones they were meant to overcome; and the radical democracy of the rural commune turns out to be most inauthentic for precisely the people who need and want it most avidly.

Saint-Preux, in search of a world that he and Julie can live in, has been wandering through the mountains in despair when he stumbles on the Upper Valais. He greets the new society with a rush of exaltation, which Rousseau presents to us as a sudden illumination, an ecstatic vision. For the first time in Saint-Preux's life, people are going out of their way to be nice to him. Unlike the Parisians, who constantly try to pull him into their worlds, the Valaisians, he reports, "went about their lives as if I wasn't there, and I was able to act as if I had been alone." They are totally devoid of avidity. Their hospitality flows from a "disinterested humanity," a genuine "zeal to please every stranger that chance or curiosity sends them."

Saint-Preux discovers the social foundations of these lovely qualities. The Valaisians are small independent farmers and artisans; their community is a democratic republic. The basic social units here are the extended family and the village commune. There is only the most rudimentary division of labor or exchange, and money is virtually nonexistent, for it is superfluous. The community as a whole is self–

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sufficient: it seeks nothing outside itself. Its economy has no luxury, but no poverty either; it is free from the economic extremes that tear the modern city apart; it produces a modest but real "abundance for all." Valaisian society is not classless, but it eliminates the inequities of feudal stratification. There is plenty of freedom here, but unlike the dreadful freedom of the metropolis, it leads to no trouble. The children seem to accept freely their parents' institutions and forms of life — forms and institutions which have brought them a freedom which they cherish deeply and use sparingly. The basic psychic fact about the Valaisians, which enables them to live at once freely and traditionally, is that their needs and desires are structurally limited. They work until certain basic needs are fulfilled, and then they stop; as a result, they have ample leisure, and look upon their work as a pleasure.

Rousseau has shown us here the deep affinity between the ideal of romantic love and that of radical democracy. He has created the vision of a world — "a new world," high in the mountains, remote, serene, unknown or ignored by the world below, free from time and change — in which these two dreams, the personal and the political, can be fulfilled. Rousseau's vision prefigures the one moving so many of our young people today — up in the mountains, out in the desert, away in the undeveloped Third World, they can feel free from the pressures of modern life. And many of Saint-Preux's successors — many of my students — have done just this, dropping out of the modern world and into old yet "new" ones. And yet Saint-Preux himself doesn't. Why? Because he gradually realizes that something is wrong with the idyllic picture.

What is wrong becomes visible in the kind of sexual experience it generates. Up here, too, Saint-Preux is free and alone, surrounded by attractive women, committed to another woman who is far away. Saint-Preux is in the most provocative situation we could imagine, yet he is not in the least provoked. What is lacking, Saint-Preux comes to realize, is in fact *avidity,* that power that animates the metropolis. In the Upper Valais, nothing leads anywhere, thought and action are totally disassociated from one another — this is what makes social life so free of tension. The happiness that men pursue up here is a "peaceful tranquility" which comes to them "not through the enjoyment of pleasure, but rather through exemption

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from pain." Indeed, *"all our desires which are too alive are deadened here. . . ."* At the heart of the idyllic dream, Rousseau makes clear to us, is a wish for death.

For some time, we have recognized the death wish — conscious or unconscious — as an ominous undertone in the cultural mythology of romantic love, but Rousseau's vision of the Upper Valais shows us how the self-destructive impulse can animate radical politics as well. We can see it now as a longing to *turn off*. If only, as Baudelaire said, we could make a leap "anywhere out of the world"; if we could detach ourselves from body, weight, movement, time; if we could be less ardent, less avid, less passionate, less profound, less human, less alive; if we could turn off "all the desires that torment men in the world below"; if, once and for all, we could just stop being *ourselves — then* we could be happy! Rousseau's image of the Valaisian republic projects this longing onto a social and political plane. The recipe reads like a morbid parody of the *Social Contract*. It is as if the Valaisians have mutually agreed to turn off and tune out, to tranquilize themselves. When people are drained of avidity — or brought up in such a way that avidity will never develop — freedom will no longer be risky; men and women can be secure in their fidelity, and citizens will be perpetually loyal and totally committed to the state. Here, at last, a final solution to the problems of modernity. The urge to get away from it all is, in the end, a death trip.

IV

Avidity is at the heart of Rousseau's dialectic. On the one hand, avidity compels men to pursue profit and power, to compete against and exploit one another. On the other, avidity alone can infuse men with the daring to get through the masks, to feel and know themselves and each other, and to fight to fulfill their real potentialities. Avidity has liberated human energy *for* bourgeois society — it has set men and women free to develop their powers in pursuit of power over one another, ending only in death. Now, Rousseau argues, it will take avidity to liberate human energy *from* bourgeois society — so that people working together, in a genuine community, can develop themselves and each other more fully than possible before.

Rousseau persistently felt an urge to run away from modernity,

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and he was inexhaustibly brilliant in imagining idyllic ways out. But he saw that though idyllic rural society, untouched by modern life, could indeed generate an "equality of soul," a "perfect tranquility" that modernization would shatter forever, there was something barren here. If mankind remained fixed at this point, turned off to his desires and impulses, unaware of the freedom (and hence not possessed of any genuine freedom) to choose, "there would be no goodness in our hearts, no morality in our actions." And, "our understanding would not . . . develop itself; we would have lived without feeling anything, and we would have *died without having lived;* all our happiness would have consisted in not knowing how miserable we really were." If the great thing is to be fully and intensely alive, then we must affirm the life-giving force of modernity — even if it makes us too alive for comfort. Thus the impulses and ideas that led Rousseau away from modernity, when they are pursued most avidly, must lead him back, and back into his own life as a modern man.

For despite its decadence, the metropolis develops in its men and women "that exquisite *sensibility* which moves the heart when friendship, love and virtue are manifest, and makes us cherish in others those pure, tender and honest feelings which we no longer have ourselves." The presence of this sensibility among the Parisians was no accident; it was integral to the character of modern men — indeed, it was a survival skill which they could not do without. The very moral imagination which enabled modern men to use ideals as screens, behind which to manipulate and exploit each other, preserved for them an inner sense of what these ideals might really mean. The insight which empowered them to see through one another today might drive them tomorrow to see through themselves.

What did Rousseau want them to see? Above all, the contradiction between the fullness of their powers and potentialities and the bourgeois imperatives which had brought these powers and potentialities into being. The necessities of the social struggle had put a premium on reason, imagination, spirit, beauty, strength — insofar as they could be used as competitive assets; beyond this one use, however, everything was excess baggage. This process had infused men and women with a newly intense sense of themselves, devotion to their personal interests, love of their individuality. But insofar as modern men defined themselves in competitive terms, they were

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forced "always to ask others who we are, never daring to ask ourselves"; to be "happy and satisfied with themselves on the testimony of other people, rather than on their own"; to "live constantly outside themselves," so that the individual "depends on the judgment of others for the very sense of his own existence." The amour propre which the bourgeoisie defined and celebrated as "self-love" was actually an inner emptiness, a total poverty and bankruptcy of self. Modernization had indeed developed the spirit to "almost the highest point of its perfection"; but the embourgeoisment which animated modernization had alienated it radically from actual human feelings and needs.

I think we can find in Rousseau a strategy that may be even more fruitful in our time than it was in his. It is to appeal to modern men on the basis of their own sensibility and awareness of life. Rousseau believed such an appeal was possible because modern society had developed in its men and women a mode of consciousness capable of transcending it. If this consciousness could be developed further, into *self*-consciousness and into *social* consciousness, then modern people — people who were intensely "ardent, avid, ambitious," who strove constantly to turn their thoughts into actions, their fantasies into realities— might be able to resolve their personal and their political problems together, to reform radically their society and themselves from within.

Rousseau's strategy was profoundly dialectical: it was to *"draw from the evil itself the remedy that can cure it."* The first step was negative: to show modern man, "who thinks he's happy, how miserable he really is." This was the purpose of Rousseau's most probing and penetrating psychological and political writing. The next step was positive: "to illuminate his reason with new ideas, and warm his heart with new feelings, so that he'll learn that *he can best multiply his happiness and expand his being by sharing them with his fellow-men."* Even the most avid egotist could be made to understand "how *his own personal interest demands that he submit to the general will."* Then, "with a stout heart and a sound mind, this enemy of mankind would give up his hatred with his fallacies; *the very reason that drew him apart from humanity would lead him back to it.* Then he would become a good, virtuous, sensitive man. In-

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stead of a vicious outlaw, he would want to be the firmest pillar of a good society."

I remember an SDS meeting at the New York Community Church on a sweltering July night in 1966. A black man spoke, from SNCC I think, and told us — as Malcolm X had been telling us for a year or so before he was killed — that there was an important role for white radicals in "the Revolution," but that this role wasn't in the black ghetto: what we needed to do, he said, was to go back home, wherever we came from, and "work with our own kind." The white radicals in the audience didn't take this very well. One of the ablest and most courageous I know, a community organizer in Newark, said: "So you're telling us to go back to our parents?" In effect, said the SNCC man, yes. "But I have more in common with oppressed blacks in the ghetto than I have with my parents in Scarsdale. I have more in common with sharecroppers in Georgia, Indians on the reservation, Bolivian tin miners, Vietnamese — for Christ's sake, I have more in common with *anybody* than with my parents! That's why I'm in the movement in the first place." Most of us agreed. But the man from SNCC persisted: we had more in common with our parents than we liked to think.

For a great many of us there could be no greater insult. But the truth is that there are some very deep impulses which we and our parents share; impulses which are frighteningly ambiguous, but which are in themselves nothing to be ashamed of; impulses which have radical possibilities for fathers and sons, mothers and daughters alike. They are what Rousseau called *perfectibility* and — in its most distinctively modern expression — *avidity*. Perfectibility: the unwillingness to settle back and rest content, the need to change constantly one's life for the better. Avidity: the desire to turn thought into action, to *do it,* here and now. It is perfectibility and avidity that lead our parents, in Scarsdale or wherever they are stuck, to trade in their car for a new one every year. How to judge them? Is it absurd to think that a new car will make them happy? Of course, this is precisely the sort of absurdity that makes the American economy and our middle-class life run. But it is not at all absurd for our parents to feel that their old car and all the other things they have now do not make them happy. Indeed, it is the beginning

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of wisdom. And it is far from absurd for them to want to do something to change their lives! What *we* have to make clear to them is that it's not so much the car, as the system that built it, that needs changing — and that we can't trade a social system in, we must build a new one.

The perfectibility and avidity that have driven our parents in contradictory directions have been driving us too. We've demanded "Power to the people!", and we've identified with any and every people in the world — except *our people*. This drive has been genuinely liberating for many of us: it has enabled us, by getting into other people, to expand and deepen ourselves; and this is what the word "psychedelic" legitimately means, and what so much of the nineteen sixties was all about. But getting into other people, identifying ourselves with them, is not enough for radicalism. Radicalism means going to the roots, and (as Marx said) the root for man is man, and if we mean to be men — *Menschen,* human beings — if we want our souls to expand authentically, we must make room for ourselves at the center. In the course of the sixties, we have learned to affirm, avidly, militantly, everyone but ourselves. Now we must affirm ourselves as well. We must move, must grow, from apocalypse to dialectic.

It is worth pointing out that the New Left began with dialectic, with a document Rousseau would have understood: the Port Huron Statement of 1962. "Some would have us believe," the statement says, "that Americans feel contentment amidst their prosperity." But the fact is, it goes on to say, most people are tormented by "deeply felt anxieties about their role in the world . . . [which] produce a yearning to believe that there is some alternative to the present, that something can be done to change the school, the bureaucracies, the work-places, the government. . . . It is to this yearning, at once the spark and the engine of change, that we address our present appeal." The signers of the statement were determined to discover or to create new forms of political life and action that would express people's "unrealized potential for self-cultivation, self-direction, self–understanding and creativity"; forms that would fulfill their "unrealized capacities for reason, freedom and love." These goals can be achieved only by transforming America into a "democracy of individual participation." The New Left, at its birth, embarked on a "search for

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truly democratic alternatives to the present, and a commitment to social experimentation." It invited the American people as a whole to take this trip with it. Thus spoke the founders of the SDS in 1962. Where are they now? How often, since then, have we been sidetracked?

The question is, how can we start again? One thing we should have learned is not to go it alone, isolated from the "modern men" — and modern women — who share our discontents and our hopes. As Rousseau indicated, this requires an understanding of the contradictions of modern life — contradictions which Rousseau faced with remarkable clarity and courage. He was the first to explore the uncharted, perilous open sea of modernity. He left us logs and maps that we can use to learn where and who we are.

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STORIES

Maureen Howard

THE THREE PIGS OF KRISHNA NURU

The day that Jimmy Cogan was accepted at Fordham was a happy one for his family. The notice came in the morning mail on a Saturday before he left for work. He whistled as he ran downstairs even though he had missed the express that would get him to the *Chateau de Chien* by eleven o'clock. On Conner Street the cement sparkled with a thousand flickering specks of mica he had never seen before. He was not usually a cheerful boy but this morning the world was filled with promises which he never believed would be for him. His mother and father had smiled until he thought their faces would break.

At the kiosk he bought a copy of *Newsweek* determined to attack the problems of the day with a keen mind. The picture on the cover was of a young Democratic Senator, a bright hope, handsome as an actor. Jim had never heard the man's name, a fact that would never have troubled him in the past; though he had read every word from the mouth of Ché Guevara, politics had always seemed too remote and meaningless. The war was still on — his peace button thrown in a drawer with paperclips and cuff links. His peace poster over the bed had popped its tacks and now lay in a roll on the closet shelf. Today he felt that he must know something beyond his blind acceptance of a cause. Beginning now, with this magazine on the subway. There was not a moment to be lost.

For weeks he had done nothing but stare into space, thinking of the bare body of the girl he slept with — Shelley Waltz. He had tried calling her his girl but that was wrong: there was no way in which he possessed her. She was somewhat crazy, a wandering, angry girl. Though she had a home she seemed more a child of

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the streets. Days went by when he did not see her, then she would be mysteriously available again, waiting for him outside school or sitting on the curbstone near his house. When they made love he felt drawn into *her* defiance of the world (operation total crap), so they touched and felt and were finally bound together in her fierce beliefs. Often when he thought of her nakedness it was to see her still arguing, arms thrown up in exasperation at one of his middle-class notions, breasts jiggling as she stamped her foot in protest. Only in fantasy could he have Shelley as he wanted her — naked still, but smooth, compliant, free of all the mimeographed texts that proclaimed her free. Sometimes he would dress her in his mind — in short skirts and a clean blouse like other girls wore, stockings and shoes. She looked up at him and listened for once: in this impossible vision he found that he could love Shelley Waltz.

Today, as a sacred vow, he would not think of her. He had left his family in a state of exultation. His victory was theirs. The twins were loud and high spirited for a change, asking if he could get them tickets for the Fordham basketball season now. After a powerful hug his mother had stood back against his father's chest in a conscious pose — looking as parents are supposed to look, solid and self-congratulatory. It was a happy day. "I am on the right course at last," thought Jim, ignorant as Percival and confident that there was still a quest for the chosen: "I am ready now. There is no time to be lost." The young senator, he read, often worked an eighteen-hour day, slept in his office, was capable of working all night as he had recently on his proposed amendment to a disarmament bill. When defeated in committee the next day he had started to redraft the amendment at once, dictating on his way home into a little Japanese tape recorder his children had given him for Christmas. Ten years ago as a Junior Congressman he had cried openly in front of his staff upon hearing of the execution of Caryl Chessman (a footnote in the magazine identified Chessman for Jim Cogan as a convicted rapist, murderer, pervert, sentenced to death who after an arduous, inspired and inspiring battle, etc. . . .). "I cry," the young statesman said, "not for the dead, but for the terrible limits upon the minds of men. That will have me in tears for the rest of my life."

Sitting next to Jim was a Puerto Rican girl in tight pants and

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a white sweater cut like a man's undershirt. The top of her breasts were dark. A miraculous medal hung on a thin gold chain around her neck. She was meticulous in her movements, looking at Jim with the expert blank eyes of an experienced subway rider, opening her purse with fussy delicate fingers, extracting a folded Kleenex from an orderliness that bordered on stupidity. He had gone out with a girl like that when he was fifteen, in the first throes of calling up girls and going to dances. She had gyrated as though her whole body was filled with sex, in a trance smiling her clean smile at him out of her private sensual world and like this one whose heavy thigh touched his, had turned to stone when the music stopped. *Her* little gold chain had dangled a cross, and her father's name was Jesus. That had always killed him. She had looked good out there with him in the lights and for months he was the envy of his friends. He was never allowed to touch her — she was saving it. She carried movie magazines inside her notebook and had nothing to say to him. He was her foreigner, some girl friend, cuento; she had quit school the day she turned sixteen and married some guy who had probably been into her for months.

"Hot," Jim said to the girl next to him who was carefully blotting her upper lip. When he spoke she got up at once and moved to the door. *Cuento,* he said to himself, one of his few Spanish words. Shelley was something else, indifferently willing and ready at all times. He thought about this for a while, seeing her bedraggled hair like tangled honey, her narrow naked body, wondering when she would show up next and in a moment the wonder turned to desire. At Fifty-ninth Street Jim got off, full of sorrow — already his resolution had weakened. Knowing that he was late for work he stood on a windy island facing the Coliseum and read to the end of the article:

> When faced with an audience of today's youth the Senator insisted that our history was still important, that we must take heart from the courageous dissenters of the past. On his desk last week his secretary had found this note midst the disorder of a hundred practical details: "Like the course of the heavenly bodies, harmony in national life is a resultant of the struggle between contending forces. In frank expression of conflicting opinion lies the greatest promise of wisdom in governmental action; and in suppression lies ordinarily the greatest peril." (Louis Brandeis, 1920)

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Across the street at the Coliseum the Northeastern Gifts and Greeting Card Show was announced on the marquee: clusters of what Jim Cogan now saw to be disgusting people were trailing in through the big glass doors. Old ladies mostly in pale spring coats and foolish hats, a few hopeless slopeshouldered men with their wives. He was filled with a loathing as much for their bodies as for their purposeless day. He marched through them swiftly, when suddenly he came to a woman laughing uncontrollably, her cheeks like withered dumplings, her weak eyes ringed hideously with bright jeweled glasses. Her hand was full of dollar bills which she pressed upon her friend in some private dispute, and turning she slapped her hand into Jim's face and the bills fluttered away. "Cunt," he said to her in the moment before she chased her money across the broad sidewalk and into the gutter. It was a triumph that died by the time he got to the next corner: he would soon be at work and there lay his betrayal. At the *Chateau de Chien* he clipped, combed, perfumed and polished the nails of quivering pedigreed poodles. He had been quick to learn. The money was good. His boss, Mimi Devereux, large bones, deep voice, wrists and hips of a tennis champ, had wanted a boy. Jimmy Cogan was a sweetheart, tall, slim, polite — crewneck sweater and sport coat. Ah, where had they gone, these college-type boys. Mimi, thirty-five and unmarriageable, fell in love with him at once. Her customers were ecstatic. If they had a son — instead of a poodle, presumably — he would be like this. The dogs were handed to him with confidence. Jim Cogan was gentle, calm — such a boy. He remembered Belinda, Amie, Serge and Watteau — and hated them all. Hated his job, and above all hated his part in the sham love of these idle, neurotic women for their pets. Their admiration showered on him like slime, a perversion of the elements.

He did it for money, for money, he said, because there was no money to educate him and he would have to do that himself. Because he had listened to the pleadings of his mother for the last time: in some way the *Chateau de Chien* touched upon a world she had seen once — an Irish secretary's view of the parlor. The job was *nice,* the big world and one step up from being a camp counselor. It was wacky. It was experience. Couldn't he look at it that way, his mother asked. For three weeks he had — grist for the mill — a fund of funny stories. And when he handed a dog back,

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washed, pouffed, beribboned, rhinestone collar in place, sweet as a farting rose, he smiled and always remembered the owner's name. Last week he had passed Hi-Marx Llewelyn into the loving arms of his mistress, "Looks like you're all done up too, Mrs. Schlotzer!" That was worth a five dollar tip and though he murmured the obligatory "Screw you" as she strutted out the door, it had not saved him. In three weeks he had made three hundred dollars: it was fantastic for a boy of seventeen. What did the world expect of him anyway? He had not wanted the truth for himself: coupled with the money there was sex, the grinning American two-headed eagle. By working midtown he could easily meet Shelley, go with her on her travels in the city, appease the final obsession. Now that he was making so much money his parents had shut up about his late hours.

The minute he walked in the door he told Mimi Devereux that he was accepted at Fordham. She was relieved, thinking that something had happened to him on the way downtown. Now he could go right on working during college — "Great," she said, "That's too great!" Mimi had an accent that Jim could not place, a plain direct speech full of buoyant tones as different from anything he knew as an actress in an English movie. For reasons beyond him she was not supposed to be running a poodle parlor. "I'm something of a rebel," she told Jim. He loved that — Mimi in her neat skirts and sweaters, loafers and a man's wrist watch. Something of a rebel. As if it were a school regulation she never wore slacks, though it would have been easier with the dogs. When the shop closed she split a beer with Jim. She told him that the customers didn't know a good animal when they saw one. They cared nothing for breeding. Last year there was a standard black from Central Park West, clipped in a show cut with the confirmation of a winner, bred out of Champion Pierrot Prime, and last week when he came in he looked like a flabby, slouching child. It was criminal. Together, they made fun of the customers and Jim felt that he and Mimi were of one age, one mind. "You're a natural," she said to Jim Cogan as he swept up the clippings. High praise, indeed.

"Yes, I'm something of a rebel," Mimi said, "I've just got to work with dogs." He wondered what it was she should be doing, what she had left or put aside for the *Chateau de Chien*. Her program was to clean up on these well-heeled floozies with their pathetic ruined poodles and get hold of a kennel — Kerry Blue terriers were

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her passion — to breed and show real dogs. Despite her awkward size Mimi handled the dogs gracefully, with an economy of movement Jim had never quite attained even with his best shots on the basketball court. She had a singleness of purpose, a dedication that was pure and appealing. Jim found he could not belittle her to his mother or explain what seemed so right about his boss to Shelley Waltz.

"What a sell-out," Shelley said, "smiling at those dead people and that dyke."

"She's not," he said. "Mimi is something of a rebel."

Now Jim saw himself on the straight and narrow, going to college. He must look at things honestly: his mother and father had stood together this morning content and happy, like they never had through all the years. *He* was going to college. *Their* dreams were fulfilled. They had done everything in their power to defeat him: moved him from school to school, each time the neighborhood getting tougher and the teachers more like keepers patrolling the aisles. They had sold themselves into captivity — his mother for a gin bottle, his father for a stack of poker chips — and then overlaid the whole picture with a trip to Sunday Mass. All of them pulled together, washed and dressed as though this could absolve the sins of the week. Ordinary sins that they had all settled into — moody silence, dishonesty, private solace. At Mass and after when they drove over to Brooklyn to visit relatives they looked like a family instead of a bunch of small-time gangsters. This morning his brother and sister, those two delinquents, presented themselves as normal happy children — happy, happy, happy — that hollow word. *He* was going to college — the rest was a lie. Fordham because he could live at home and save money and because he had listened to them for years. Father this one and Father that one who had taught his old man — a splendid product *there* of Catholic education. His mother and father stood for nothing but the Sunday morning mock-up, nothing more than muddling through. He was infected. Already he felt their dishonesty had seeped through him — insulting an old lady on the street to set himself up, sucking up to fools with fat purses, fussing over silly animals, making it (one more time, one last time — already the lie was born) with a girl he did not love.

Jim Cogan worked hard during the afternoon. Taking in poodles from the front waiting room, following Mimi Devereux's

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directions. He was allowed to do only the simplest and cheapest clips. After a shampoo he dried their ears and topknots with a little electric hair dryer meant for a person. If they nipped at his hands he put on gloves. The miniatures trembled, their hearts thumping heavily in their tiny chests. In the late afternoon a CBS newscaster came in with a brace of gray standards for a shampoo and comb-out. The man's face was a mask of prominence, betraying nothing beyond the measured warmth with which he announced our national disasters. Jimmy Cogan stood in awe of his haircut, his fingernails, his clothes — things he did not notice on the women who came in the shop, though his mother had said, having stopped to see him at work — "Those ladies! The money on their backs." He saw the customers of *Chateau de Chien* with soft bellies, tortoise like, laboring under a hump of green backs, being walked by their poodles at the curb. This was solace. At five Shelley called to say that she would be in Union Square at 9:30. After a long pause he said, all right, wanting to tell her he was accepted at college as though she were an ordinary girl friend, "What's the matter?" she asked, "You sound funny."

You bet I sound funny, Jim Cogan thought, and I'm going to sound funnier, because you are a weird sad girl and I don't need it. Hanging around street corners by yourself. It had been a month now since he'd seen any of his friends. He had not even called them this morning when he got the news. That's how far he was into Shelley's world — like he had dropped out of life. No more (just one irresolute bang tonight) and then no more. At five-thirty Mrs. Schlotzer who had no appointment showed up with Hi-Marx Llewelyn. She was hysterical. The dog would not walk for her. She took him downstairs and he would not budge. She carried him to the curb. He urinated and stood there. Up in the apartment he sat on the couch, was lifted to his meal of chopped steak for three days now. Same for Mr. Schlotzer. Same for the doorman. She knew Hi-Marx was faking — had caught him romping with his rubber porcupine in the middle of the night. What had she done to deserve this? Her couch was slubbed silk, getting a large oily spot from the one place he sat. Lifting her drained face to Jim, she pleaded, "Give him everything."

"Yes, Mrs. Schlotzer." The dog, an apricot toy, went readily to Jim.

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"What have I done?" the woman cried jealously, and, answering her own question, said, "I should have bred him, but I couldn't bring myself. Give him polish, cream rinse, clip and comb."

"He was clipped last week."

"Pretend," said Mrs. Schlotzer, "make a buzzing. I never should have let you people do the utility cut. From the moment the pompoms went he's been strange."

"Yes, Mrs. Schlotzer." I hope the stones fall out of your rings. I hope your credit cards are stolen. I hope Mr. Schlotzer is making it with his secretary.

"He likes you —" she said gloomily — "Pick out something for him — a rain coat. Two weeks ago I got him one of those Italian baskets — he sits on the couch. My God —" she cried — "what have I done?"

Hi-Marx Llewelyn walked pertly into the back room with Jimmy Cogan and leapt up on the counter to be serviced, a quivering small beast, panting with excitement.

"That poor soul," Mimi said, popping a tranquilizer down his tiny throat. "This is the third dog that bitch has ruined. I don't know what she expects of them, but they feel destroyed by her, broken."

Hi-Marx Llewelyn raised his anxious face to Jim, his delicate muzzle dwarfed by a monstrous ruff of hair, his heart slowed to a heavy throb as the tranquilizer set in. He pawed Jim's sweater, he scurried around the counter, his nails clicking on the slick surface. Poor little bastard — he was having fun. Coyly dashing at Jim he had an erection: the pale pink crayon of his defeated masculinity. He was brave to sit in his oily spot on the Schlotzer silk couch, to pee and sit at the curb, not to be paraded up to the shops on Fifth Avenue in absurd costumes and a showy ruff. Jim grabbed a set of clippers and worked fast (the dog was so small he could conceal him with his body) shaving Hi-Marx Llewelyn down until he was bare as a rat. Gone the tuft at the end of his tail. Gone the ornamental rings of fur on his spindly legs. His head unnaturally exposed with the topknot gone was flat and narrow: otherwise he looked the miniature of any normal self-respecting mutt. With the dog hidden under his sweater, Jim waited for Mrs. Schlotzer to return and wrote this note:

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Mimi,

I take full responsibility for my act. There comes a moment when we must stand up and be counted. Today that moment came for me.

James Cogan

P.S. I am sorry we must sever what has been one of the most meaningful relationships of my life.

Hi-Marx Llewelyn growled when he heard his mistress's voice and ran into the front room to nip at her ankles. With his rolled, tattered copy of *Newsweek* Jim waited until Mrs. Schlotzer's screams reached operatic proportions and ran past her out of the shop. Bring them down, Jim thought. Bring them down.

It was only when he was slouched in a movie seat wasting the two hours between his exit from the *Chateau de Chien* and the encounter with Shelley Waltz in Union Square that he realized he had not been paid for the week. He felt enormously proud: life had begun after all. The battle was launched. On the screen a girl with fantastic legs but a plain face made love with an artist, an older guy. They ran down the streets of a blue-hazed New York doing beautiful free things, eating ice cream cones, lying out in Central Park. Then the artist's wife showed up and it was over — he had faked it and gave this feeble speech, in a business suit and tie now, about how much it had meant, truly. Bring them down. Bring them down. Bravely the girl rode off on her bike in the final scene, her honesty and integrity intact in the full light of day. Wearing blue jeans and a fatigue jacket she peddled off across Brooklyn Bridge.

Shelley Waltz waited at the top of the subway stairs in Union Square. Her round childish face looked less sullen than usual, more actively annoyed. This evening she wore a new Indian robe, diaphanous and white, and looked like a child who has lost its role in the Christmas play. Her first words to Jim Cogan were not encouraging: "This is all a big mistake."

Jim looked down at her filthy bare feet.

"I have to go to Clauson's place," she said defiantly.

"So?"

"*I* have to go there," Shelley said. "There's something on."

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They argued for a while in front of May's and she started to walk east on the long block toward Third Avenue with Jim at her heels. Having seen her, he wanted her. A soft breeze billowed the white stuff of her garment and he saw, or thought he saw, that she was naked underneath. One more time to be with her in a dim back room at Clauson's or in the dirty forgotten park near her house and then no more. To impress her Jim told the story of Hi-Marx Llewelyn: in one manly act he had finished with the poodle parlor that she hated.

"You're so involved with all that," Shelley said.

"I'm *through* with it!"

"It's the same thing," she turned on him, "look at you — just look!"

It was true, he did look a sight in his chinos and sweater when he finally trailed her into Clauson's place where a crowd of squatting white-robed figures murmured in the candlelight. From a dark corner a woman with gray hair and big pearl earrings came forth clacking finger cymbals while she sang a song without words. The man next to Jim passed him a joint and they shared while Jim heard his long story, this man with orange sideburns and extremely yellow teeth, how he had done something holy that day. As participation in Creative Love he had felt the entire side of the office building he worked in with his eyes closed. He felt the oppressive regularity of the cement and the hard cold surface of the aluminum panels, the inhuman scale of the whole, the mass, the enormity of structure that made him into a wincing midget each day as he went through the great arcaded entrance. Now that he had felt, the man said, it could never frighten him again. Now that he had charged himself with negative waves from the monster he could meet the beast in battle every day and stand like a giant in his new power. He could re-create the touch of cement and glass. If you know with your body you do not fear, the guy said. After a while Jim felt obligated to say he had felt the flesh of a dog that day, the soft close curls, the nearly hairless underbelly. Some people sang together. Patrick James Clauson, their leader, sat by himself facing the group on a leather hassock, wrapped in white, of course. A plump faggy Irishman, he might have been a priest in the Archdiocese of New York. From time to time his voice rang out in maxims:

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"We will feel and breathe our way back into the world. The world will not change us. We will re-create the world."

Jimmy Cogan emptied his wallet into a brass box that was passed to him and began to chant. He felt again that life had truly started. He was free. His words seemed to him inspired as he told a girl with long snarled hair that he had felt the underbelly of a dog. Having experienced that soft flesh with the heart pounding he would always feel kin to the animal, feel one with its small anxious body. Girls danced, Shelley among them, rotating her head in a frenzy of relaxation. He thanked God — the old man with the beard, the God whose cross he drew on his body before each quarter in basketball, each fifty-yard dash — that he had not told Shelley Waltz he was accepted at college.

"The daughters danced in the desert, their bodies like fountains," — P. J. Clauson rose from his hassock in glory — "and the desert was the city. With their tongues they licked the foul air and breathed forth their purity. With their hair they watered the stone and flowers grew. With their fresh bodies dancing they brought forth a garden until the city was no more."

Quiet descended as though a signal were given. All the white-robed people read in thin green books which reminded Jim Cogan of his bankbook. He alone was empty-handed, apart from their feeling. His legs were sprawled out while they, he noted, they had magically tucked their limbs neatly away like nesting birds. Trying to be one with their mood he took *Newsweek* from his pocket, his only text: "Last week," he read, "in Los Angeles Superior Court, curvaceous Sherrill Lang (39-23-35), space-wife in TV's popular *Stardust Lane,* defended herself against accusations of ex-husband Mike Dougherty that she had undergone breast surgery in El Paso, Texas, in 1962 to obtain the remarkable proportions which launched her Hollywood career. Surprising Judge Stanley Marcus, braless Sherrill bared her bosom for the jury who awarded her the five dollars plus legal fees she was seeking for defamation of character: 'Money means nothing,' said Sherrill, buttoning up her simple dress. 'I want to be a serious actress and I'm sorry if my breasts stand in the way!' " Even in this story, Jim saw the terrible deceit. It was supposed to be funny, he knew, but that was too easy. Fraud everywhere. Lies. Had Sherrill Lang *wanted* to play that scene in court?

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Yes. In the picture, "Space-wife with Agent," he discerned her cheap smile of victory. Priceless, this coverage in the national media. Oh, bring them down. All around him these crazies, Shelley's white-robed people, were striving for honesty and it seemed that he alone wore a sweater of dissent. What did the world expect of him? It was too hard, the pieces too various — as though there were a thousand scattered bits of glass or fool's gold and he was asked to assemble them into a mirror. The folly of Clauson's store-front temple bewildered him: incense and Indian bells you could buy in any gift shop. Yet there was no disputing fact: the room was still and full of peace. Tears streamed down Jim Cogan's face.

Shelley was beside him, holding him, begging his forgiveness. He could come with her always to Clauson's. Jim told her that his whole soul seemed to laugh and cry in torment. He was torn between visions of freedom and the dutiful years ahead. "I'm going to college," he confessed.

"You're so involved in that," Shelley said.

His mother had planned a celebration, he knew. He knew her ways — given hope once more, he knew all the little embellishments that she would foist upon his triumph to make it her own. Now she would put away an uncut cake, rejected by her wandering son. She had not boozed all the long afternoon. The children were washed and dressed. Their father was home, but now he would go out to find a card game. At Jim's own place on the kitchen table a large present gaily wrapped awaited him and he could not guess what lay inside. His tears were blotted by Shelley's hair.

"Cry," she said, "Go on — cry."

It was a real breakthrough he knew, to cry with this weird girl. In her white robe, in the candlelight a beauty flared in her and in a torrent of words he confessed it — that he had wanted her one more time.

"Sex," she said, "is unimportant."

"My friends," he cried in final confusion, "I haven't seen my friends in a month."

The voice of Clauson rose as though out of Jim Cogan's emotion: "My friends, let us observe the lesson. Upon his feast day Krishna Nuru received from the Prince Dhrahman a farm which was old and in great disrepair. Thinking that the god Krishna would list the property among his dominion but would not care to see the farm, Dhrahman was well pleased with himself. Immediately Krish-

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na Nuru rode to the place and saw that it was on the north side of the mountain where the village ends. Here lived the poor in their shacks, the farm no more than a pitiful collection of these buildings leaning one into another."

The story rang true for all the squatting figures on Clauson's floor. Holding Shelley to him Jim Cogan wondered at the man's cleverness for the last time. P.J. Clauson, pudgy, pink as an angel, was lost in his own performance: "The fields of the farm were bare as dunes and the well was dry. A few chickens and three thin pigs were the only creatures on the land. At once the god Krishna sent a letter to the prince thanking him for the tribute of this beautiful farm. The prince raged and rode out to make sure he had not given the wrong property away, but upon coming to the old farm he met Krishna Nuru sitting on the broken gate in a robe of gold cloth celebrating his good fortune with wine and song.

" 'Come see,' he said to the prince with godlike demeanor, 'come see my lovely pigs, for they are surely the wisest animals in the land.' Though Dhrahman saw three pigs who had been fed and washed but looked no better than they should, still he worried at the delight of Krishna Nuru. He returned to the palace to say that the god's powers were sorely depleted when he thought he had riches in three thin pigs. Still it troubled him and he sent spies to watch the farm. The god Krishna lavished great care upon this land. A new well was found and wheat planted. An orchard of wonderful fruit trees which had been thought dead blossomed in the spring. All the little buildings were set straight and painted. The gate was put back on its hinges and the mysterious pigs grew fat and beautiful. When Dhrahman heard these stories he was devoured with jealousy and rode out to the farm where Krishna Nuru himself was throwing grain out of a basket at the merriest chickens ever seen.

" 'Come see,' said the god, 'come see my lovely pigs, but be quiet for they are hard at work.' Surely, said the prince to himself, he is demented and thought with what relish he would describe the great god feeding chickens in the barnyard."

Shelley Waltz swept her arms up around Jim Cogan's neck. Lovers at last, they were enfolded in the same white robe of belief. The silence in Clauson's presence was perfect. A last shallow flame of life flickered from the candles upon the faces of his audience — his congregation.

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"But strange to say the three pigs were truly busy feeding on corn that was bright as gold and when they had finished they turned to the prince that he might see their marvelous girth and it seemed to him that they smiled. Now the prince rode off in a terrible fury, humiliated by the cleverness of Krishna Nuru's pigs.

"Each day for a hundred days he returned and each day it seemed to the prince that the pigs grew more beautiful and that they mocked him, for he could not believe that they merely ate and slept and grunted in the hay and that the god Krishna had not performed some magic upon the animals. His cheek grew pale and his body wasted with envy until at last one day the prince cried out to them: 'Why are you so happy?' and Krishna smiled with his pigs.

" 'Why are you so happy?' cried out the prince in anguish.

"And Krishna Nuru answered: 'What your eyes see, your heart will believe.'

Jim Cogan was enchanted by Clauson's tale and listened with full respect as the prince met his just and terrible fate. Bring them down — the empty, the deceitful of the world, the devouring parents who would feed on his heart. *He* was going to college, driven by the years of their desire. Yes, he would do their bidding, but the triumph would be his — already he could see himself in the garment of a simpler time and place they could not understand, a lamb in a murky difficult landscape. Tracings of flowers, birds, vines adorned his neck and breast in the white, white shirt he would buy tomorrow in some heavy-scented Indian shop. The Prince Dhrahman was outwitted by pigs.

Clauson stood in the dim light with arms outspread, a fat hovering Holy Ghost above them:

"Krishna Nuru has written: Dhrahman, who valued appearances, attempted to cheat the god Krishna but cheated only himself. For Krishna by honest work transfigures the commonplace into beauty. Thus he would instruct us all to live with effort and grace."

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Gerald Rosen

From BLUES FOR A DYING NATION

PRE-GAME SHOW

"Ain't no mother-fuckin machine gon make no fool a Moms! No *sah!* Not Moms! I waren't bo'n yestiday ya know."

We are in line at the tollbooth gates. One lane to the right of the line which is being blocked by Moms. I'm sitting in the back seat, reading General Eisenhower's joke book, *At Ease: Stories I Tell to Friends.* I'm going into the army, I guess. But through the dense sweet smoke which fills our little car, over the edge of the page, I can't avoid the pull to the periphery. I watch her. Her movement lures my eyes toward her — toward activity.

"I put one fuckin dolla in this fuckin machine and I ain't movin one fuckin step till I gets my change."

We move ahead one notch in our chain.

She slams the door of the ancient wreck she is driving. "No sah, I been round too long for them to pull that kinda shit on me!"

As she mounts the tollbooth basket in the automatic change lane, she lifts her dress to spread it over the edges of the basket rim. I can see the enormous black balloons revealed as, her back toward me, she lowers her soft bulk onto the basket.

My wife, Edith, who is driving, searches for change to pay our toll. She isn't aware of what's about to occur. Next to her, on the front seat, slouches our friend Warren, stoned. Staring down at his toes.

The toll basket is made of silvery metal, pocked with rows of tiny circular holes. Through these little apertures I can see Mom's flesh, in blackheads, protruding.

Then, with her feet up off the ground, her knees pressed against

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the tollbooth wall, squatting on the silver basket, she begins to piss.

Edith pays our toll.

"No sah! Moms waren't bo'n yestiday."

Edith shifts into first.

"Moms ain't getting taken by no fuckin machine!"

We rumble and whine away from the tollbooth gates. The geese begin to honk their horns at Moms. Over my shoulder, on the small movie screen at the back of our Volkswagen, I can see my Black Dale Evans, riding into the distance on her metallic mount, her arms flailing in circles above her head, swinging twin lassos which aren't there, while she continues to piss into the machinery, yelling like hell.

I turn to the front but I can still hear the brass ensemble playing in the background as the bank tellers in the booths thumb frantically through their little green books: *Rules and Regulations of the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority*. They are seeking the proper guidelines for action.

SECTION 17. Crazy Spades

A. Shitting.
B. Pissing.
    1. On Highway.
    2. On Soft Shoulder.
    3. On Officer of the Law.
    4. On Innocent Denizens of the Open Road.
    5. None of the Above.

Edith shifts into fourth, perfectly.

"Oh Wow!" (Warren has discovered some new fact about his foot.)

The speedometer levels off at fifty. I turn back to the jokes — back to Ike.

Commercial

Vice President Herbert Hubert, on a fact-finding tour of Southeast Asia, spoke to one of our reporters on a dirt road in the back country near Danang, S. Vietnam. "You see, Marvin," he said, "someday, and I hope it's not going to be too long from now, in fact I *know* it's not going to be too long from now, roads like this will be a thing of the past in Vietnam. When peace and prosperity return to this wartorn, brave little nation, I know, and I know the President and the American people

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will back me up when I say this, I know that American engineers and American know-how and matériel will be here, here in Southeast Asia, and they'll build a whole system of highways, a whole network of new roads all across this brave little nation, so the villagers of South Vietnam can move into the twentieth century, along with their allies in the rest of the free world, where they so rightly belong.

"And not long after that, Marvin, not very many long years after that, do you know what they're going to have here in the provinces of Vietnam? Do you know what I guarantee they're going to have, Marvin?"

"What's that, sir?"

"Cars."

Bulletin

And This Little Piggie . . . Gone!

AUCKLAND, New Zealand (Reuters)—The little toe is on the way out because of tight shoes. Dr. S. R. Bob, an American foot specialist, told a New Zealand conference that in 10,000 years man will have only four toes on each foot.

Bulletin

Man Denies His Death

WORKINGHAM, England (UPI)—After the local newspaper ran an obituary on James White, a councilor, Mr. White telephoned the Town Clerk and said, "I may have been in the hospital for 13 weeks — but I'm a long way from dying."

First Quarter

Camera One

"Stop! Stop this vehicle!" the sergeant shouts. "STOP THIS VEHICLE!"

Edith squeals the car's wheels. The sergeant flies forward onto the back of my seat and neck. The squeal then yields to a whine. A loud whistling scream.

"Hit the dirt!" the sergeant shouts toward the roof of the car. "Take cover. Incoming!"

He reaches over my shoulder and throws open the door. "Take cover!"

BOOOMP!!!

Trees crack on our left as splinters and spectral bits of fire fly by.

"Incoming! Take Cover!" the sergeant yells, as if he were

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commanding an entire company of men spread over the area of a baseball field, rather than the three bewildered people whom he alternately pushes (because of the danger) and pulls (because I'm an officer) to the side of the road and into a ditch.

SCREE–E–E–E. . . .

"All in the area. Take cover!" he shouts at the sky as, just like in the movies, we leap into the ditch and nestle our faces into the cool soft dirt.

BOOOMP!

Like mad eagles, swooping, they scream down. Eagles out of control. In crazed radar-jammed dives down after prey. But continuing to ac-cel-LER-ATE in never stopping sweeping falls until all their majestic beauty and force is lost in soft pillow-tossed bursts of blood and feathers. The world's natural soaring king plops flaming apart in an anticlimactic

BOOOMP!

That's all. Booomp! But the earth shakes as the fire begins to wail and the screeching eagles howling down at invisible speeds become meteors of falling fire and explode against the ground like burning paper bags filled with water.

SCREE–E–E–E . . . . . BOOOMP!

Making craters in the earth.

I peek over the edge of the road. I must see. And, apart from the others, I am given a private arc to hear. To trace the flame of its fall. To hear it ride the rainbow down. To its end. In the housing development. In a single home, brick and neat with tended lawn and, to greet the guests, a brightly painted plaster statue of a smiling black Uncle Tom in front. Fishing. With a plaster fish hanging suspended from the wire at the end of his protruding rod.

And as the house flies apart, like a brick balloon burst from within, I watch the fish on Uncle Tom's line. Swaying gently, helplessly, in the hot wind that was once a warm home.

And pieces of the history of the home glide gracefully by. There goes part of a see-through oven door. And a window frame. And a single boat. And bricks fly through the air — blocks that were once the cells of a house. And the severed head of a large toy doll. And pieces of glass and wood and, no doubt, silk.

While I continue to watch the black angler's fish. Suspended.

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Even after the holocaust. Dangling forever from dark Uncle Tom's rod.

"Sir!" the sergeant cries. "Please. Put your head down."

The sergeant, Warren, and Edith are slightly lower than I am, their heads snuggled into the roadside bed. Eyes down, bodies taut, like children determined to hold their breath until they turn blue. Hugging the earth — the skin-soft side of the ditch.

SCREE–E–E–E . . . . . BOOOMP!

I pull my head down and listen to the sounds of tearing-apart around us. The ripping and flinging and screeching falls. Until, although I can still hear the resonance of the din within my head, I realize that it has stopped. The earth has ceased its quaking and, as before a storm, the air is still. I peer over the side of the road toward my fish. It is still on the line. Still.

Camera Two

Ellis Hospital was not far from our quarters. I drove there, guided by a map which the sergeant had left us. When I reached my destination, however, the sign in front of the building read ELLIS SERVICE STATION.

It was the right name, Ellis, and pictured beneath it, I recognized the staff with the wings on top and the snakes entwined around it as on the medical caduceus. But I was puzzled, for it should have been a hospital.

The building itself was an old, single-storied structure, built on stilts. Its immense length made up for its lack of height as it extended parallel to the road for a distance of about three football fields.

I entered the building via the main entrance and turned into the first office on the left. I must have startled the little WAC who was tending the desk for she quickly straightened up in her chair and tried to hide a paperback book by covering it with her left arm.

Then she looked up. She was one of the few American Negroes who are absolutely black. Her skin was as smooth as ivory. And her teeth white and perfect when she smiled. Which she did when she saw me. And she relaxed, and sat back in her chair, revealing the book she had been reading. It was Flaubert's *Sentimental Education.* In translation. She couldn't have been more than eighteen years old.

"I'm Lieutenant Klinger."

"Oh, Jacob Klinger. We've been expecting you. One second,

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please," she said, as she rose from her seat. "The colonel will want to speak to you."

She picked up her book, smiled again as she placed it in the top drawer of her desk, and walked into the adjoining office. Through a glass window in the wall, I could see her speaking to a man in a business suit with two silver bars on each shoulder. He rose from his chair, squinted a peek at me through the window, nodded knowingly, and entered the office beyond his, the third in the line.

Through the glass of two windows I watched him confer with a corpulent, silver-haired man, who wore a silver leaf insignia mounted on each of his shoulders. He too walked up to the window in the wall, looked me over, and went into the office beyond.

In a minute, he bounced out of the fourth office and into the captain, who bounced out of the third office and into the WAC, who bounced out of the second office and into the cueball.

"You can go in to see the colonel now, lieutenant. He's waiting for you."

"Just step this way, lieutenant," she said, as she walked over to a strange-looking object in the corner of her office. I had never seen anything like it before. It had four wheels and it resembled the kind of movable beds (or tables, perhaps) which the hospitals use to wheel patients to and from surgery. Only it wasn't flat on top, but rather boxlike. As if a kind of telephone booth had been mounted on the table top of the cart. Or a confessional.

"Just lie down here, lieutenant, and I'll wheel you in."

"What?"

She shrugged her shoulders and gave me an I-only-work-here look. Then she grasped the two bicyclelike handlebars at the rear of the cart and tipped it forward until it reached about a forty–five–degree angle and the foot of the box rested on the floor. She was able to do this because the forward two wheels of the cart had been set about half-way back under its base, rather than at the front.

I walked around to the foot of the cart to lower myself in, but before I did I noticed a large sign which had been affixed to the outside of the foot of the box. On it, there was neatly painted a single word. IN.

When I lowered my body into the box and crossed my arms on my chest I couldn't help but feel that I had lain down in my own

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coffin. And that it had always been waiting there just for me. At that precise point in space. And time.

But when the WAC leveled me out and wheeled me by the interested faces of the two officers in the intermediate offices I felt more like I was in a baby carriage.

There was no window in the wall of the colonel's office. There were, however, two doorways, separated by a vertical wooden pillar, between his office and that of the heavy light colonel, which preceded it in the row. Each had a small sign above it. IN and OUT. I was pushed under the sign marked IN.

And then dumped in the fourth office. It was larger than the others and plushly furnished with rugs and plastic covered armchairs. It seemed to be the last office in the line, for in the far wall there was only a single small door which appeared to lead to a closet or to a private bathroom, perhaps. A large mirror filled the top half of the door. Next to it stood a tall bookcase filled with army manuals.

Behind a huge desk (which was proportionately bigger than the lieutenant colonel's in about the same ratio as the lieutenant colonel's was bigger than the captain's) sat a man in medical whites with an eagle on each shoulder. The colonel.

"Hello, lieutenant." He reached over the desk, stretching to grip my hand, "Glad to see you made it. We've been expecting you. My name is Dr. Creetner. Have a seat." He pointed to a steel-gray colored chair which faced his desk.

"I wear two hats around here, lieutenant," he said, proudly. "I'm chief of old Ellis here," he patted the top of his desk as if it were the neck of his faithful horse, Trigger, "and I'm Post Surgeon." As he said this, he pointed across the room to a hat rack, on which there hung two hats. But they both looked the same to me.

And on the wall, above the hat rack, there hung a flag. It pictured the medical caduceus above the motto, "Conserve The Fighting Strength."

"Yes," the doctor said, leaning back in his chair, "if the balloon goes up, I'm in charge of all medicine in New England."

He then proceeded to ask a few perfunctory questions — when did we arrive and how was our trip. He was about sixty years old, with a square-chinned face and short light hair which was quite thin and neatly parted. His handshake had been unduly

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vigorous and there was a kind of withered toughness about him. One could imagine him in the role of a high school football coach. Or better yet, as a former high school coach, who, after seven consecutive losing seasons, had been kicked upstairs to head the school Hygiene program.

"I'm sure you'll fit right in here, lieutenant. . . ."

On the wall to my left there was a series of large, framed photographs, one above the other. On the bottom, I recognized Doctor Creetner. Above him another Doctor in white, with a star on each shoulder. Next, there was a general, in military uniform, with three stars on each shoulder. Then a general sporting four stars and, above him, an oriental in a business suit. The Commander-In-Chief. President Sun.

"That's the chain-of-command, lieutenant," the colonel said, with pride. "Oh, lieutenant, I meant to ask you, did you ever play any sports?"

"Well, I did quarterback a. . . ."

"Good, good. You'll be our new recreation officer. . . . And, lieutenant, do you have any questions?"

"Well sir, I do think I have a few. The first is, well, I thought I was to be working in a hospital, but. . . ."

"Oh, yes. . . . Well, lieutenant, hospital is just one of our functions in this new modern army. You see, things change fast nowadays, and you've got to keep a step ahead of the tide of progress or it'll wash over you is my motto. Yes indeed, we've come a long way since the day of the foot soldier, lieutenant. Yes indeed, we certainly have. . . . You see, son, we perform a service function in this new army. That's why, a few years ago, when they closed down old Ellis Island — you remember that, lieutenant? — I volunteered to fill in the breach."

He selected one pipe from the dozen or so standing in his pipe rack and lit it with a series of quick sucks.

"What do you think happened to immigration after they closed Ellis Island, lieutenant?"

"I hadn't really thought about it, sir. . . . I guess I thought most immigration ended back in the twenties. . . ."

"Yes, yes," the colonel said, impatiently, "that's what most people think. But when Uncle Sam slammed the door it bounced back aways, and we've still got thousands of them slipping in every

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year. Critical skills, relatives, Mexicans, P.R.'s. And there's where we fit in, lieutenant. Most people didn't appreciate the job that was still left to be done. *Somebody* had to process all those greasers. So, since somebody had to do it, and since service is our function, lieutenant, I volunteered.

"Our name was already Ellis Hospital, so it was just a matter of changing the "Hospital" to "Service Station." I suggested it to the general, up at Post Headquarters one day. He ate up the idea, and quicker than you could say Jackie Robinson, we were in business."

He punctuated his statement with a slap on the top of his desk.

"So you process immigrants here now, sir?"

"And not just some immigrants, son. *Every* immigrant to Uncle Sam's sunny shores has to stop right here at Dr. Creetner's lighthouse. And we perform other service functions here at Ellis, too, but no time for that now . . . got too much work to do. . . . Paperwork piles up on you nowadays." He reached over to an enormous pile of papers stacked on the floor against the side of his desk, removed the top sheet, and began to read it, moving his lips as his eyes followed his finger across each line.

"Doctor, can I ask just two more quick questions?"

"Shoot," he said, looking up from his papers.

"Well, in the first place, what about my uniform? I was wondering about the uniform requirements here at Ellis."

He straightened up in his seat and smiled. "Oh, yes, uniforms. Well, lieutenant, I think I have some good news for you. We don't wear uniforms anymore here at Ellis, son. This is a new Army now. Uniforms are becoming a thing of the past. The public just doesn't keep up with what the Army's doing these days. This isn't World War II, you know."

He relighted his pipe.

"No, lieutenant, you'll find no uniforms around here. We wear dark blue three-button suits, light blue shirts, dark blue ties in the style of the season, dark blue socks and black shoes. . . . You had one more question?"

"Yes, sir. My main job. Will it be in accounting?"

"Didn't I tell you, lieutenant? You're our new Troop Commander."

Astonished, I was about to say "Troop Commander?" when

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a rapid hammering or pounding began to sound on the small door to the colonel's bathroom. The colonel pursed his lips in exasperation, shaking his head from side to side. "What now?" he muttered.

The racket continued, the tempo of the banging increasing steadily.

"Just a minute. . . . Just one cotton-pickin' minute," he said, as he rose from his chair and went to open the door, still muttering frustrations under his breath.

The open doorway revealed a small, tile-floored bathroom, and in it, to my amazement, behind a tiny desk set between the sink and the toilet, sat a dried-up old woman, still swinging the cane which she had been using to pound against the door.

"Mother, how many times have I told you. . . ." the colonel began, but she interrupted him with a downward crack of her cane against the top of her little desk. Then, without saying a word, she lifted the cane and pointed it toward me.

The colonel followed the line of the shaft with his eye. He got the point. "Oh, yes, lieutenant . . . take a haircut, will you. That kind of thing's OK if you play the violin, but in this man's army we like to be able to separate the women from the men."

His mother's prune-wrinkled puss changed into the shape of a tight, little smile.

Camera One

But my eyes are drawn toward the door. Toward the small door which the colonel has pulled open. It has been completely swung open so that it rests against the colonel's bookcase of Army manuals. So that I can see its back side.

And through the top of the door, through the glass of which it is composed, I can see the rows of manuals on the bookshelves. I can see right through the top half of the door. And that's how his mother was able to see me. The top half of the colonel's bathroom door is a one-way mirror.

The colonel closes the door on his mother, straightens his tie and white medical jacket while looking at his reflection in the mirror, and returns to his desk, saying abstractedly, "Honestly, it's a wonder I

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can get any work done here at all, what with all these interruptions every minute."

He sits at the huge desk. "Where was I, lieutenant . . . oh, yes, we were about through for today, weren't we."

"Yes."

"*YES*!" he shouts, leaping up so fast he knocks over his chair. "*Yes!* What do you mean, *Yes,* lieutenant? Where do you think you are? . . . Back in school? . . . It's Yes, *sir,* lieutenant. Got that? Yes, *sir*!"

"Yes, sir."

"Well don't you forget it. Don't get tough with me because you're educated, lieutenant. You won't get anywhere in this man's army that way, let *me* tell *you.*"

His furious face fills with bloody hue. "Don't get high-hat with me. I'm an M.D., lieutenant. I went to school too, you know. Don't ever forget that, lieutenant. Just don't get high-hat with *me.*"

He sits back down. But he doesn't remember that his chair has been overturned. So he doesn't stop going down when he reaches desk level, but drops out of sight behind it. He falls right on his ass.

Soon the colonel has gotten back together with his chair and is again seated at his desk, a bit calmer but still flushed. He presses a black button on his desk top and says, "Now go on out of here, lieutenant, and get down to business."

"Yes, sir." I rise and salute. He salutes back, remaining seated. Then the WAC appears with the surgical cart. It seems to be the same one, except for the sign on the front, which has been changed: OUT.

Camera Two

That night I drove into town. Turned right at the liquor store onto a narrow, blacktop road, striped with gravel and sand rather than sidewalks. There were no street lamps. Only the lights from houses sporadically softened the darkness. After about four blocks, I saw, up ahead on the left, a building which was three stories high with a red neon sign hanging from its front wall. HOTEL HARLEM. There were several cars parked in front, so I stopped and parked on the gravel, about a block away.

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Camera One

I turn off the car lights and the street darkens. Lock the car and walk gingerly toward the hotel. As I pass a thin alley between the hotel and the house preceding it, "Hey, man," comes out of the black.

"What?"

"Hey, man, I need some change to make dinner. You got thirty-five cents?"

In the pocket of my pants, two coins. Both quarters.

"Here," I take out one of the coins. "Here's a quarter. That ought to start you on your way."

He takes the quarter, looks it over in the dim light as I turn away. A hand on my shoulder.

"I said, man, I need thirty-five cents."

"Look, I gave you a quarter. . . ."

He moves out of the alley. A glint of steel flashes in the thick gloom. A straight razor. From out of his sleeve. He backs me against the wall, holding the razor low, at his hip. His bright eyes reflect off the blade.

"I said *thirty*-five, man. Not *twenty*-five."

"OK. You've got me. Take it easy. Don't get excited." I reach into my pocket and hand him the second quarter. "Here. This is the only other coin I've got."

"OK, man. That's a little bit better. Now we're getting down to business."

He folds the razor and places it in the breast pocket of the old sport jacket he is wearing. From out of the same pocket he removes another object. A pair of clear-rimmed Army glasses. God only knows where he got them. He puts them on and brings his left hand out of the pocket of his baggy pants. It's full of small change.

"Now let's see now," he says. "Put out your hand here, man." I place my hand in front of him, palm up, and, one by one, counting each aloud to himself, he places upon it a nickel and ten pennies.

"Now that's a little more like it," he says, as he puts the remaining coins back in his pocket and fades back into the blackness of the alley.

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Roberto Ruberto

A CONVERSATION WITH DJILAS

INT: Ehrenburg's position is rather unclear; but, in spite of all, I have the feeling that he was an honest man.

DJILAS: No, he was till his last days, as long as he lived, an opportunist. But he was an intelligent man and at the end of his life, in the period of Khrushchev, he used the situation and finished his life as a very honest man. But he was really an opportunist; and to be an opportunist in Communist countries means to agree with crimes. It means to participate in such crimes. Not spontaneously, but under the influence of the Soviet regime. He participated in attacking the others who were being purged.

INT: During the Stalinist period.

DJILAS: In the thirties, yes.

INT: Was he aware of everything?

DJILAS: I think he was.

INT: In your short stories there is so much crime. There is also, indirectly, the question: what is crime? Political crime, I mean.

DJILAS: In politics you cannot say that Stalin was a criminal, for example, but there is a borderline between revolutionary acts and acts of violence. For example, Lenin was very cruel but he did not pass the line. He did not kill any member of the party. He sent many to concentration camps up North — he invented the concentration camp, that's true — but that was a marginal step, not essential for Lenin's regime.

INT: But looking at them as human beings, what is the difference between a man and a party member?

DJILAS: From a philosophical or human point of view there is no difference, I agree completely; but in concrete politics to kill a member of the party means *instauration,* the rising of personal power.

INT: Yes. You talk about this in your *Conversations with Stalin,* I remember. But in your short stories there is a conflict between political and moral values, which to me seems quite strong. Take *The Foreigner,* with this very beautiful, human character, Gordana. . . .

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DJILAS: I have not resolved the question. I am glad you liked this story, because not many people liked it.

INT: Well, in Yugoslavia they don't even know it.

DJILAS: No, they don't. None of my books has been published in Yugoslavia. And now in America, Harcourt Brace is publishing my big novel — six hundred pages — *The Lost Battles.*

INT: When did you write it?

DJILAS: While I was in prison.

INT: Does it have the same background as the other works?

DJILAS: No, the period is different, but the themes are more or less the same. It is about the second part of the struggle between Montenegrins and Turks. But the problems are human, not historical.

INT: So the characters are imaginary.

DJILAS: More or less. They are not historical. But I took some of them from real life, and of course I changed them. Sometimes several men are represented in one.

INT: Is there anything epic?

DJILAS: There are some epic elements, some very strong epic elements, but they are not the only ones. There are also lyrical elements, and some other forms of approach. There is psychology, but not directly. At least that's what I think. As you have seen in my stories, there is very little psychology, and indirectly. I think that psychology used in the classical way, as in Dostoevski and in our time in Joyce, is already past. At the same time I don't think that they are not great authors; they are excellent: Proust, Joyce. They are excellent authors.

INT: Do you know Pavese?

DJILAS: A little, not much.

INT: There are parts of your writing that remind me of Pavese. Only that Pavese didn't have much of a sense of humor, while in your story, *The Waters and the Woods,* there is some. Although this is the only story of yours where I find some sense of humor.

DJILAS: Yes, I haven't much humor. I think in my life there wasn't much humor, and I think that as a person I am not inclined to it.

INT: What about writers like Gogol?

DJILAS: Oh, he is excellent. I like only writers like that, that have black humor.

INT: I would like to ask you: which, in your life, came first: the writer or the politician? There are writers, like Silone, who started out as politicians, as organizers. . . .

DJILAS: For me the writer came first, but I was always inclined toward social and political problems. But in this sense, though: not in everyday politics, but to those great problems involving the changing

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of societies, the changing of human beings. Now I changed my opinion in the sphere of politics.

INT: Yes, I can see that in your last book that just came out in America.

DJILAS: *The Unperfect Society.* Anyhow, I am against the so-called "engaged" literature, in the sense that Sartre is.

INT: How about Camus?

DJILAS: I am more inclined to Camus's ideals. In literature and even in philosophy. I feel very close to Camus. I was astonished, when I read him for the first time, to see how many ideas we had in common.

INT: Are you referring to his essays?

DJILAS: I read first *Le mythe de Sisyphe,* that's the first book of Camus I read. I read it too late, in 1954, when I was in the Office and then I was expelled from the Central Committee. Later I read his other books, the best of the others: *The Fall, The Stranger,* etc. I find him one of the best authors of World War II. *L'homme révolté* is also good. It has new ideas.

INT: To write about political issues and have a universal meaning is not so common. Not everybody can write a book like Dostoevski's *The Devils.*

DJILAS: Not even that. I don't think *The Devils* is good.

INT: Turgenyev's *Fathers and Sons?*

DJILAS: No, not even *Fathers and Sons.* I think that literature and art generally must be engaged, but not in everyday politics, in party struggles. They should be engaged in some great human ideas. You cannot avoid talking about human beings while dealing with such problems.

INT: Yes, the most important thing is man. His relation to a political or social issue, with its moral implications. And even when this issue is resolved, there is still the problem of existence: man on this earth, with the big questions: what to do, how, and why.

DJILAS: With such questions literature must be engaged.

INT: In this respect, don't you feel that everything in politics is temporary? It is only one stage leading to another. And so is Communism itself.

DJILAS: I agree with you. This Communism. We don't know about the future, what will happen; but this Communism is temporary.

INT: Isn't Marxism itself leading into something else?

DJILAS: I think that Marx was one of the greatest thinkers, but Marxism is a small dogma. (*Laughter*) Just like any other dogma. Probably the idea of Marx was to avoid the dogmatization of his ideas,

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but even he didn't succeed. But his successors, Engels himself and even Lenin, were excellent dogmatics. If Lenin weren't a dogmatic he couldn't have succeeded in the revolution. He succeeded because he was an excellent and convinced dogmatic. And a very intelligent man at the same time. He was also a genius.

INT: Well, let's get back to this novel, *The Lost Battles.*

DJILAS: The Montenegrins lost only the battle, but not as human beings. There are some philosophies that say that only lost battles are good for the regeneration of human beings.

INT: Why?

DJILAS: Because lost battles force man to think more about his destiny, about moral issues, and he comes out more spiritualized.

INT: Practically, would you say the same about an individual? If a man goes through. . . .

DJILAS: Yes, it is the same. For example, what would have happened if Germany had won? Now the Germans are in the process of changing—we hope they are. But look what happened to the victors.

INT: Yes, I see. Look at England.

DJILAS: And in the First World War it was the same. It was bad for all, except for the Russians, who had lost the war. But the Russians recovered later, through the revolution.

INT: Wouldn't you say that there are other reasons involved? . . .

DJILAS: I wasn't speaking about this as a law; but in practice, making an analysis, we could say that this happens.

INT: But there are other reasons. . . .

DJILAS: Yes, this is true.

INT: We could prove the opposite with the Romans, for example. They won so many battles, and did not disintegrate.

DJILAS: They did.

INT: Finally. . . .

DJILAS: When they organized the empire. After Augustus, it was really a decadence.

INT: But how many battles had they won, by then?

DJILAS: Yes, but they did not create much after they were victors. They lived as aristocrats, lived in abundance, and they degenerated increasingly.

INT: Yes, that is what Vico would say.

DJILAS: Yes, I know. And Petronius, he gave a good picture then. An excellent document of the days.

INT: Of one milieu of a certain age, I would say. Because if somebody of the poor classes or a slave had written his *Satyricon,* the picture would have been quite different.

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DJILAS: The greatest achievement was probably made by Lucretius. Lucretius is great.

INT: Well, Catullus is also great.

DJILAS: In literature they are not bad, the Romans; in philosophy, they did not produce much.

INT: Seneca. . . .

DJILAS: No, no. The Romans don't have great philosophers. They have thinkers but not philosophers.

INT: Well, the same could be said about the Italians in general. With the exception of Vico, Aquinas, or Croce. . . .

DJILAS: By the way, to go back to engaged literature. The *Divina Commedia* is also engaged.

INT: Oh, definitely. Even in *Paradiso* Dante deals with political problems.

DJILAS: And that's what literature should be like, I think. To be engaged in great national problems, not in everyday politics. Dante was a partisan, but he went beyond those everyday passions. *Divina Commedia* is probably the greatest engaged literary work ever written.

INT: Could you tell something about the novel you are working at right now? The title is *Bridges and Worlds,* isn't it?

DJILAS: Yes. It is a very big novel. Two thousand pages. It is about a massacre performed by the Serbians on a small group of Moslems.

INT: Something like Musa Dagh.

DJILAS: Yes, but my theme is different from Franz Werfel's novel, completely. Mine is not a realistic novel. You see, my short stories—they are only superficially realistic. In essence they are not. I am concerned with some problems more than with some realistic description.

INT: Is it a choral novel?

DJILAS: Not only. It has many characters, but it is many novels in one novel. It is like the great river and many rivers flowing. Not strongly connected among them. I think such is life. In life connections are not strong; the lives of the communities and of the individuals go on relatively independently; but at some points, in certain periods, they connect.

INT: When did you write *Conversations with Stalin?*

DJILAS: I wrote it in 1961, after my first release from the prison.

INT: Did you have in mind to write it before?

DJILAS: Yes, I had the idea.

INT: But you couldn't.

DJILAS: No, I did not have the possibility. I was arrested.

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INT: When did you come to realize this about Stalin, the way he was? I mean, like the portrait you give of him in your book.

DJILAS: Oh, after the conflict with him. But at the same time now I think he was one of the great historical men. Very cruel and very dark, like Peter the First or Ivan the Terrible.

INT: But morally speaking. . . .

DJILAS: No, you can't consider him within moral measures. To lie in politics, this is normal.

INT: Is it?

DJILAS: It is. (*Laughter*) I think. It comes as a consequence. Because if the others try to cheat you, you must cheat them. Stalin is the only politician who made the principle from the lie.

INT: Aren't there also many others?

DJILAS: You cannot find such a man in history. For example, he said once to some movie director that Peter the Great made a mistake. Which one? And Stalin said: "Petrushka did not kill enough." (*Laughs violently*) He was good, he said, but he made a big mistake: he did not kill enough. You cannot find such a man in history.

INT: Have you written anything fictional on this subject? I mean, do you think you will some day?

DJILAS: Probably not. Not more than I did in those *Conversations*. Now I wrote some essays on Stalin, about some problems related to Stalin. For example, what were Stalin's ideas. What he thought about Marx and Engels. And about Lenin's testament. Because the discussion in the East and in the West about Lenin's testament is completely confused. Everybody thinks that Lenin's testament is something great, but Stalin — how to say — Stalin avoided. . . .

INT: Talking about it.

DJILAS: Talking about it and putting it in practice. You see, in his testament Lenin really meant that Stalin was his nearest successor, and nobody else. Because he spoke only about Stalin's personal mistakes, that he was not polite, or something like that. But speaking about the other Bolshevik leaders, he spoke about their political mistakes. That does not mean that Lenin said that Stalin should have been his successor. I think that Lenin was also confused in writing the testament. Because, you see, nobody thought about the moment he wrote it; he had had a strong attack during the night, and the next day he wrote the testament. How after such attacks could he. . . .

INT: What attacks were they?

DJILAS: In the brain. That was arteriosclerosis. He died of arteriosclerosis.

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INT: Was he kind of senile, then?

DJILAS: Not senile. As confused as a man who was so near to death could be.

INT: He knew it.

DJILAS: Of course, he must have known it. The next day he dictated the testament.

INT: Who wrote it down?

DJILAS: His secretary. And everybody speaks about this testament as something very great. Maybe, in reading it carefully, one may feel that Lenin had some fears for his personal power. He was afraid to lose his power as a dictator.

INT: And Stalin might have taken it.

DJILAS: He couldn't have, but one may feel that Lenin was afraid of that. Because, imagine a man who is writing something like a testament and doesn't say clearly: this must be my successor. It must be analyzed in more details, and my conclusion is that Stalin was his nearest successor. Practically, that was his idea. Because, if you read Lenin's last works, his correspondence and everything, you see that he criticized bureaucracy, but only as an inefficient apparatus, not as a social phenomenon. That means his intention was to improve it. But he did not criticize it as a social phenomenon, as a new force.

INT: He didn't see it.

DJILAS: He didn't see it. He saw that there was too much bureaucracy and not enough efficiency, and so on.

INT: That's what you did with *The New Class*.

DJILAS: Yes, in essence that's what I did.

INT: Do you feel that you have lost a lot by not writing as much as you wanted?

DJILAS: Yes, I lost more than twenty years, participating in politics. And at the same time that gave me something. I think it gave me a deeper understanding of society and man. Of course, if I hadn't participated in politics I would have written many books, probably. But at the same time I think that now I am writing better.

INT: What would you have done if you hadn't been in politics?

DJILAS: I would have been a writer.

INT: Wouldn't you also have been something else? A journalist, or a professor?

DJILAS: Probably not. Only a writer.

INT: But could a writer live in Yugoslavia just by writing?

DJILAS: I think I could have, because I wrote relatively easy and much.

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INT: So you could have made a living just by writing?

DJILAS: Yes, probably I would have. Maybe I would have taken some other job also, but not as a professor, not as a teacher.

INT: Haven't you also taught?

DJILAS: I was a student of literature.

INT: But you also taught at the university.

DJILAS: No. I didn't finish the university. I am a teacher of revolution. I am a professional revolutionary, half intellectual.

INT: But when you were in the States, didn't you teach at Princeton?

DJILAS: I lectured on the problems I wrote about in my last book.

INT: How long did you stay in the States?

DJILAS: About two months, a little less. I was in New York and at Princeton.

INT: With what department?

DJILAS: At Princeton with the Woodrow Wilson School. It is a school of social problems, of politics. It is a good school, well organized.

INT: So, these days writing creatively is your main concern?

DJILAS: Yes.

INT: What authors have influenced you most?

DJILAS: Dostoevski, probably, and our popular poet Negos.

INT: I see that the "gusle" appears in some of your stories. Have you been influenced by folk poetry? Have you read that book by Alfred Lord, *The Singer of Tales?*

DJILAS: No, I don't know that book. I have been influenced by folk poetry in the use of the language and probably in some other aspects, but not completely.

INT: You talk about the *Leper* as a legend.

DJILAS: Yes, half invented and half real.

INT: But the story is not written in the language of the people. The language is very literary, the craft. . . .

DJILAS: No, no, no. I used the popular language but only as one of the elements. My language is not only popular; it is my own language, my personal language.

INT: Yes, that is obvious. With your last book, though, my feeling was that you were dealing directly with philosophy. Are you going to deal with problems at a purely philosophical level?

DJILAS: No, never. I hope not.

INT: I was wondering. Because you are a realistic person, but at the same time I was surprised to find in your last book this concern with ideology in a rather abstract way.

DJILAS: Did I? I have spent a lifetime participating in the affairs of my country, because I was born in Communism and fought as a

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Communist, and I feel I have some duty to continue the critique of my own past.

INT: I understand. But *The Unperfect Society* is also a book which deals with philosophical aspects in a philosophical way.

DJILAS: Not really. That's only a critique of ideology, some aspects of ideology. Maybe I am a thinker, but not a philosopher. I don't think I am a great thinker, but I think about some problems and I write about them. I am not a philosopher. I am not a scientific man. And I am not a historian.

INT: That's funny. Many consider you a historian after reading your book on Negos. I have heard praises from professors of Slavic history. . . .

DJILAS: That is not a book of history, but a study, a literary work. That is my best work.

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Robin Magowan

I CHING

There was a time when I had knelt to the Gods. I had been sick, love sick, and then suddenly successful. So she whom I loved and was my sticks and stones had become mine — hand, heart, liver. I could not desire more.

So it was then, at this height, that she proposed we play the *I Ching,* the Chinese game of fate. I rolled the hexagram, "Abundance":

> Abundance has success.
> The king attains abundance.
> Be not sad.
> Be like the sun at midday.

It was, I learned, a very good number — none better. I would fall of course, but not for a while. Meanwhile I should consider myself fortunate, revel in that, when the drop came, realize that a drop of that sort was maybe just like one of rain, bad only from the point of a cloud ego. Since I had been choking on that abundance, was that abundance, had it around me like glass (when it broke where would I be?), I was naturally obliged to pay some attention to these words, see that the problem in climbing anything is not in the getting up, but in the getting down. My notion of happiness only went one way. To get out of this alive I needed another two-directional one.

The hexagram told me I was now the happy man I had set out to be ten years earlier. Who killed invisibly, parasitically, from the inside. Very best disease next to their most glamorous, sickest smile. Watching them go mad, and perhaps only mildly discomforted by the rope I found looped about my office doorknob, or the follow-up black glove left a week later on the bare desk. Which meant if I was going to kill, I should start with my own much too long neck.

Afterwards I realized how shaking and trembling I had been with

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the delicacy of my good fortune, all mounted there in green, leaflike, around me. Maple against which I pressed all I had of my face and eyes. It was a faery delicacy, and what made it so was the seventeen-year-old presence itself — goodness, sweetness. Also the unstabbed rawness with the pain I couldn't see, because it was — and who can see the wind? The March day on a beach, maid Ophelia face down (as on an aerosol) floating over the hurt, bent, lilac waves.

The lover is the mourner of what shapes his destruction: cave of his hands; wan-willow smile. To possess is to see it all go extinct — glass pane upon which I press and press, and no day rises. A growing doom; a sense of continuing breakage. Each day under the sheets. That same lightlessness.

She had contracted vaginitis from an overdose of sulphur, and each love-making was, accordingly, a stab. After a while I saw only salt, crystals, blood; the blood of a being in the process of becoming just her rock hardness, the father-like man she was being defeminized into, who stood in the back of my head screaming, "You've seduced my daughter — statutory!" I was terrified and no wonder. For even if this has been made up for now, there was still this mute suffering, this unfulfilled vengeance that her eyes had to accept, like a testing. The worst was that she could not ascribe a certain time to it and let it go at that; since for neither of us was there any time, just these sea-black days that only California can make believable. We lit our fire, we put it out, we sat with our little knees out over the doorjamb of the balcony where we then lived, a plate nearby on a chair, picking at it while the sunset watermeloned through the arches of the city-reflected balcony. The wind was grape glow, satiny, without fixture. We sat by it, felt its moisture on our elbows and cheeks, and dreamed, of other places, other men (I the other places, she the other men). The world was a fallen tablet. We had picked it clean, and our views formed incompatible zones. We had arrived, each, at our own narrow perfection and, like some costly china, held it close to our chests, inverted. For her, it was some faith humanly shared, like existentialism or buddhism. For me, probably just she: the last of all last countries; the perfect adobe hut. I entered, I put my parka down, I took off my shoes, I lit a match, and as I did this parody of the ascetic I forgot how nail-like and short and painfully stabbing was this life I had yoked her to, cell where she was but the nudest of bulbs.

Round face, or rather more deerlike than round, carved in wood, in sun-smile; with great blue-green-gray eyes such as Patinier loved to put in his pictures' backgrounds. And, like Patinier's blue, these eyes signified a quest, they were she. Thoughtful, like a day that is just a day,

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just her favorite rain and emptiness, a light gray-green fog enclosing all the Berkeley hills so that only outline remained, the brick of a stair, the burnt black wood of a shingle house, a pair of window panes all fretted and saintly. Discomposite things, but then so is a church's rose window. Only this window lay on the ground, fragments anyone might come to, pick up, throw away. That casual and erasible. Her aim was the sorceress who would find value in what for everyone else had been waste. She was fine, and her eyes that melted you also formed you, made me whole again. She was blacksmith and privy, and when she locked me in her heart it was not without making herself bereft, doomed. Like a Spanish saint she was her own best wound.

One can see the strength she furnished in advice and example, and the immense cost it bore her in the necessary self-immolation that each gesture and generous thought entailed. Still she kept on, and here I may have helped. With my six-gun and my writer's knives that I'd be constantly licking, polishing, keeping my inward self serviceable, cat–clean: *any day, any time, sir,* and the hand flashing out to seal the bargain. In the process our lives began to take on a see-saw regularity where the one up could lend a hand to the other.

At first, I was too stupid, or too overcome by admiration, to see she needed my help. And she was too proud, and too much a woman, to ask for it. So our troubles always came down to my not talking, just as our best love-making followed on some heart-to-heart talk I felt squeamish before. They seemed banal, adolescent pretention, I'd tell myself. In reality, I was plumb afraid. For the only way she knew of to make me talk seriously was by threatening to leave me. Finally, she realized things weren't all that black-and-white. If I couldn't talk, it might be that I didn't know how. So, she set out duly to teach me, hauling out dictionaries to sprinkle the night air with words, telling me stories that were her dreams and memories, or just things she had read.

One part of the instruction was to teach me to use my own *I* when talking. I was afraid of this American pronoun. As I construed it, it meant a dead self, since its "I" was a person I no longer was. Thus, for any continuity it would be untrue, and this continuity — my life all one spontaneous garden-flow — I wanted very much to assert. I did not see that without it I had no way of confronting time, and who I had been. The mere notion of such a quest was anathema. My bath-room eyes wanted all the inhuman glint they could get, and confounded that with the strength of the cloak Perseus puts on, before setting out for the Medusas of an always more fetching modernity.

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Richard Bender

VISIT TO A SMALL PLANET

"How should a city be designed and its circulatory system arranged to accommodate a people that employs energy and mass at present American levels? The past offers only wisps of inspiration, but no usable models. Consistently, we have failed to face the sheer physical challenge of the contemporary city, assuming that old urban forms would be adequate if we amended them a little to meet one crisis after another." Thus Max Ways put clearly the problem of the cities — of urban support systems — in "How to Think About the Environment" in *Fortune* last February.

For in the last thirty years, public and private utilities have mushroomed, while technology in general has been in the process of constant refinement, and large corporations have developed sophisticated methods of organization and planning. Yet all these changes have been quantitative, not qualitative. At the present time, while each utility, each service system, appears to reflect the new concerns—ecology, environment — each still works independently, not in fact as a system at all, but as a subsystem, a component of what should be considered one life service system.

Why we still look at the parts instead of the whole reflects the history of utilities systems in this country. Initially, cities needed institutions to manage their activites. Separate agencies at separate times were formed to build bridges, pave streets, direct traffic, collect trash, build parks, clean streets, treat the sick and run the schools, police and fire protection services. It was late in the nineteenth century before most large cities were incorporated; and by that time, the pattern of uncoordinated and competing utility services was well established. The patchwork of *ad hoc* solutions had come to be accepted, and was, indeed, viewed as if it had been a part of the Creation. We were al-

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ready, as McLuhan puts it, "riding into the future with our eyes on the rearview mirror."

And this pattern, in fact, is that of almost all of our recent technological development. Each new invention solves the problem it was designed to solve, only to create a larger one. In the process, we reshape our view of the problem, until we see solutions only in terms of the technology which created it. Traffic jam? Build a new highway! Airlanes crowded? Build a bigger jet! And so we go, climbing an endless technological ladder.

We have forgotten, for example, how to think of water supply as anything but pipes and pumps and reservoirs. Our conceptions of waste removal are focused on how much we can accept and treat — we look only at output and forget we can control input. Street lights, fire hydrants, catch basins, automobiles, busses, planes and trains are packaged to reflect our fragmented artifact-view of the world. We are so accustomed to conventional ways of dealing with functional needs that we can no longer separate the performance we desire from familiar solutions to these requirements. We confuse increase of quantity with increase in performance — the tool has shaped the user.

My industry, the building industry, is no different from any other in this respect. It is still working in a strategic and conceptual framework of quite ancient origin. Object oriented, it has developed its rules out of past experience and it depends upon the existence of technical constraints not only to tell it what to do in any given instance, but to tell it what it can do altogether, what its choices are. We have become "the sex organ of technology," acting blindly to perpetuate those means which are meant to be our servants.

In sum, what is wrong is that we have been looking at the future in terms of the past. Today's problems are systems problems, which cannot be met with limited and fragmented conceptual formats. We must consider problems on a wholistic basis — we cannot continue to view them as a group of independent, autonomous parts.

A city is a system. If we do not view it as a system, it will simply be, as it is in so many cities, a bad system, in which the problems of air pollution, water supply, transportation, electric power, the distribution of food and material, the collection and disposal of wastes, housing, race relations, education, medical care, rats — it's an overwhelming list — are impossible of solution.

Technology *can* solve these problems. But it will not be able to simply by refining or expanding the elements of traditional urban centers. It must attack the problem from new directions and on a new

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scale. New tools, techniques, processes, products and organizational forms must be invented. Obviously, there are many directions we might take — I want here to talk about two, two scenarios for change.

The first alternative is the development of a large-scale, systems-oriented life service industry, which will have charge of *all* the services, supplies and systems necessary for the support of community life: public utilities, housing, communication, transportation, even recreation, education and medical care. Conglomerates will run each community's system. They will expand vertically, to control the stages from raw material to consumer; and horizontally, to balance the highs and lows of business.

The basic difference from our conventional view is the extension of the concept of public utilities. For isn't housing as much of a public utility as water supply? What about heat, hot water and air conditioning, as well as power? The functional core is a sort of General Motors of communities. It does sound promising, but the past performance of the large manufacturing corporation is also frightening. What controls do individuals have? What opportunity will there be for industry?

Can we expect more public control of these aspects of community life? Can we expect the conglomerate to be more responsible to the community it serves than are our current fragmented systems?

There are, however, organizational forms which can supply the service and support we need without the restrictions and standardization associated with the mass production of automobiles and appliances. Perhaps General Motors is not the best model. A better one may be the Telephone Company. For your telephone is not yours; you selected its color and its style from one of several models, but the company owns the instrument, the wires, boxes and controls, those in your house as well as those outside connecting you to other telephones.

Forget for a moment your frequent annoyance these days with bad service. Compare the research activities of the Bell Labs with that of the building industry. Consider the extension of telephone service over the past few generations. Compare the telephone lines with the electric and plumbing lines which change ownership (and responsibility for maintenance) at each property line. The utility company provides a pipe to your property, but you take responsibility for hooking up to it. To do the work, the owner must select one of many small contractors who buy their materials at high prices in small quantities from many sources, who train workmen in different styles, who take a different order of responsibility for their work, and for maintaining and repairing it. We have only to compare the problem and the cost of finding a

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plumber to repair a leaky fixture with that of having a telephone repaired to understand the force of the change I'm outlining. Finally, consider the implications to the financing of a house. All the services and appliances which hook up to houses — pipes, valves, dishwashers, water heaters — have different life expectancies. Owner expectations and engineering innovations make some obsolete in a few years, while others may exceed the life of the structure. Yet all are now part of first cost — part of the mortgage, and the interest on their cost continues to be paid long after they are replaced.

The telephone analogy for a life service industry implies a new interface between public and private. Imagine a house conceived along these lines. Water, electricity, communication, heating and cooling and the basic structure of the house as well, will be rented from the utility. Basic ownership cost will be negligible, and services and appliances become rentable options. Dishwashers, hot water heaters, and the pipes, lines and ducts which service them will be part of a single system. They will be part of the capital expense of that company. Ideally, the occupant of such a house will rent up-to-date, well maintained service, located according to his needs; for repairs, replacements and upgrading of equipment are functions of one organization. The Shelter Industry will make improvements to maximize the entire system's efficiency — a dishwasher that uses less water will have value in his situation, as will a water heater with higher fuel efficiency and lower heat losses. Household appliances will be standardized, as they become part of a larger system: like the telephone, they will become familiar enough to be invisible. And what is saved by planning will be reallocated to make our lives richer.

There is great potential in this scenario. It solves many present problems by applying broad controls to a range of fragmented functions. It is powerful and logical, but there are other alternatives. Let us look at a second scenario.

We are in the midst of cultural changes which echo a growing discontent with present institutions, and a movement away from them. ". . . Remotely done power and glory — as via government, big business, formal education, church — has succeeded to the point where gross defects obscure actual gains. In response to this dilemma and to these gains a realm of intimate personal power is developing — power of the individual to conduct his own education, find his own inspiration, shape his own environment . . ." (*Whole Earth Catalogue,* Introduction).

This kind of cultural change will, I think, be reflected inevitably

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in technological change, which will have three basic elements. One, the importance and the power of the individual, and his relation to technology, is emphasized; two, what could be called "ephemeralization" — the idea that things can be, are, less permanent, less stable, lighter, thinner, more open and less visibly structured — becomes more and more important; and three, there is a movement from linear to dispersed forms — from "clocks to clouds." Our second scenario of future utilities technology involves all three.

"Ephemeralization" in current technological development is easy to find. Lighter, more flexible mechanisms are being devised to do each new job. The heavy stone column and the steel H section have been replaced in buildings by lighter metals in more intricate assemblies. As engineering science improves, structures continue to reduce in weight, transistors replace tubes, air lanes and radar tracks replace roadways, as we move from the wire to wireless, from the track to the trackless.

One can see the same trend in utilities. Generators, switchboards, pumps and circuits do more with less. Electricity can heat a house without heavy fuel tanks, furnaces, pipes or ducts. Vacuum sewage systems move household waste without the large quantities of water traditional sewers need. (Looked at in this light, many recent developments are clearly out of step: consider the weight of concrete involved in the plan to bring northern California water to Los Angeles by canal, or the millions of tons of garbage about to be aggregated as part of big city waste management programs.)

But before exploring the hardware implications for a new utilities system, let us also look at the implications of the shift from linear to dispersed patterns of organization. Clocks and clouds are good analogues. A clock is a precise, hard-edge machine. When you set it working, you know exactly where each part will be and what it will be doing. One can predict where it is going and how it will behave and what is going to happen to it. We think of technology as clocklike. There is, however, another mechanism that is also effective, though difficult to predict: a cloud.

As we learn more about clouds, we find we can begin to make the same kind of predictions we can about clocks. Clouds — clouds in the sky, clouds of gnats — move according to a set of rules — the motion is related to temperature, sunlight, wind. There appears to be more random motion in a cloud than there is in a clock. That action though, is not random: the controlling mechanism is invisible, but it is real. Clouds are more complex machines than clocks, but machines just the same.

In fact, the nineteenth-century corporation was clocklike. It had

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a clear purpose, a clear direction and a clear point of view. The Coca–Cola Company made soda, U.S. Steel made steel. The structure of the corporation, its leadership, goals and techniques were clear, clocklike. But corporations have been restructuring. We have seen the development of the conglomerate, and if we compare it to the corporation, we can see the shift from a clocklike to a cloudlike apparatus. What after all does Litton Industries do? What business are they in? What tools do they use? What do they make? What are their goals? Who is their leader? Not only the leadership, tools and goals, but the control system as well, have become cloudlike, and more difficult to perceive.

Cloudlike mechanisms are developing all around us — in education, medicine, government, transportation, recreation, even housing. What would a cloudlike building industry look like? We see housing factories, tools and pieces rather than finished houses, tools and pieces which will be designed to make people less dependent on decisions made at the factory. We will invent a kind of automated cottage industry where homemaking is meant to be part of daily life and where the home is expected to grow, change and perhaps even to move with each family. Our factories — and the kind of factory we are building now for future use — are designed to produce ready-to-wear houses in a world that is ready for custom tailoring. The utilities, services and institutions which we provide to support these houses are equally out of step. What we should do is turn technology around to the point where we give people tools and the mechanism and design framework to support them. Then houses will be the creations of their users, rather than responses to the needs created by technology.

Power lines, for instance, can be eliminated by the substitution of total energy systems. Single fuel supplies (gas, for example) are used directly for heating, cooling and generation of electricity. In rural areas, the savings on pole and line costs make this generating equipment as attractive as aesthetic considerations do. In the future, more and more dispersed settlements will build on this idea. Nuclear energy is another possibility for independent power supply. Containers of radioactive waste with a half-life of more than twenty years have already been used as a line-free source of energy, and nuclear cells, solar energy and cosmic radiation as energy sources may not be far in the future. If this seems "futuristic," think how impossible radio or television seemed a century ago. New technologies always look like magic.

There are still other energy sources available to groups of buildings and communities. Solid waste incineration, reuse of waste heat and energy from household processes are two important possibilities. We

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can begin to construct energy storage systems for individual buildings; systems which draw from central supplies at a steady, low level, and store energy for use during short-term peaks. Systems of this sort make individual buildings more independent while reducing the capacities required by central plants. Still other systems for resource balancing can be found in small-scale versions of the great power grids, which will link all of a community's resources to meet peaks with shared capacity.

Closed water systems can recirculate most water, the way HVAC systems now recirculate air. The little fresh water needed for periodic topping off can be supplied by local wells, rainwater, precipitation of moisture from the atmosphere or truck delivery. The additional cost of local hardware would be balanced in the savings realized through the elimination of public water systems, savings which are not only monetary, but visual and ecological as well. Work of this sort has been under way for some time as part of recent programs for naval vessels, space vehicles and aircraft. Large aircraft manufacturers have increased the time required between toilet waste removal and input to water supply from eight hours to hundreds of hours by introducing techniques which separate drinking and wash water from waste water through recirculation and solid waste removal and compaction. The space program has developed systems to sustain life with recirculated fluids for trips to Mars. (Other systems are under study which include the waste as a source of heat, hot water or power.)

Closed systems of this sort are more than more efficient ways of doing what needs to be done. They reflect the development of a new synthesis, in which the family unit will have moved from the early freedom of its earth-related, closed system (the land, a well, septic tank, compost heap and fireplace) through the linear development of public utilities to a new level of independence. High technology products will supply human needs without the constraints created by our present view of utilities.

But can existing industries reorient themselves to provide these new tools? Can they turn their energies from metropolitan power generation — with its related problems of air and thermal pollution, oil spills, blackouts, congestion and inflexibility — or from the construction of thirty million gallon per day desalinization plants and even larger canals and reservoirs? Can they begin to concentrate on the new dispersed package? Experience would indicate that they will not. Just as the railroads could not move into the emerging automobile industry, the telephone companies did not enter radio, the photographic establishment did not discover polaroid photography or dry copying and

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the electronics industry ignored computers, established industries will die slowly, to be replaced by new industries which emerge to meet new needs.

I've talked about two scenarios: the development of a high-level, technology systems-oriented, large-scale shelter industry; and the growth of a new individual-oriented, dispersed "Whole Earth Catalogue" of tools and materials.

In the last third of the twentieth century, we have come to believe that technology can solve our problems. It holds the promise of conquering poverty, of making health, happiness and peaceful and productive lives possible for all the world's population. But we have learned too that it poses enormous threats. It can divert our resources and feed itself at the expense of our needs, and it can wipe us out in one enormous catastrophe. Technology today is at the center of our perception and experience. Concern for the individual — within a systematic technological context — must replace technology in that center.

We have viewed two scenarios. The question is: which will it be?

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THE ZIG-ZAG WALK: Poems 1963-68. By James Logan. E. P. Dutton. $5.95.

CROW. By Ted Hughes. Harper and Row. $5.95.

THE EYE-BEATERS, BLOOD, VICTORY, MADNESS, BUCKHEAD AND MERCY. By James Dickey. Doubleday. Cloth: $4.95; paper: $2.45.

REGARDING WAVE. By Gary Snyder. New Directions. Cloth: $4.75; paper: $1.75.

RELEARNING THE ALPHABET. By Denise Levertov. New Directions. $1.75.

ICONOGRAPHS. By May Swenson. Scribner's. $4.95.

What these poets have in common is that they are mostly between around forty and around sixty and have established a reputation (that is to say, a set of expectations in a fairish range of readers, which, if they are to carry on instead of marking time, they must partly satisfy but also partly cheat: an old conjurer cannot survive without new tricks). The exception is Richard Howard, a newer talent

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(age unknown) and to me an exceptionally attractive and promising one. The big names here for older readers are Berryman and Auden, for younger readers probably Hughes and Snyder. Looking down the list as far as Mr. Logan we have poets who, whatever their political politics, are poetically traditionalists (remembering Eliot's dictum that originality is not a clean break with the tradition but some development of it that subtly alters our perspective on the tradition as a whole). From Ted Hughes's *Crow* downward the poets are more like Eliot's clean-break poet (the "absolute originality" which would be admirable, he thought, but it just can't be had).

Accepted critical categories cease very usefully to apply. Hughes is a myth-writer, Denise Levertov a wisdom writer, Miss Swenson a serious joker. Dickey, older than any of these, knows what the tradition is about, but is engaged in a kind of (fairly humane) all-in wrestling match with it. A test for dividing the two groups is the willingness or unwillingness to write poems about, or in terms of, other poets or poems, well-established myths, art forms. Another test is whether the New Critics' question "How consistently does this thing on the page hold together?" seems critically relevant. One is engaging with Hughes, Levertov, Swenson, Dickey and Snyder (use of *haiku* and imagist tradition to trigger off mystical perceptions) much more in terms of response to total attitude, life stance, than in terms of analyzable poetic success. The poet, let us say, seeks to overthrow the dictatorship of the poem.

As a middle-aged man, brought up in the days when (Gad, sir!) literature *was* literature, my habit-bound bias is of course in favor of the first group. But I shall try (and that also dates me) to be fair. *Homage to Mistress Bradstreet* and the earlier short poems made me admire Berryman very much, but *The Dream Songs,* which almost everybody else went overboard about, seemed to me pretentious doodlings. They were poems, perhaps, arising from some wholly inner crisis, and the point about Berryman is that he is essentially an objective, observant, comically observant poet (himself, often, as one of the comic objects). He is an extrovert, with a passion for telling anecdotes. *Love and Fame* as a set of autobiographical anecdotes from school and college days onward reminds me of Thurber's *My Life and Hard Times* or (the anecdote of the drunken wife of the very influential critic, at the New York party, whom nobody will lay, either because, like one man, they know how influential the critic is, or because, like the Berryman–*persona* in the poem, they are even more drunk than she is herself) of Edmund Wilson's *I Thought of Daisy.* This is not to say that

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Berryman is not a very serious poet (the opposite of *serious,* in this sense, is *trivial,* not *comic*). He has the very rare gift — Pope had it, Byron, Auden, sometimes, who else? — of talking good off the cuff literary criticism (criticism over the drinks, not criticism in the seminar) in verse: talking about his earliest literary enthusiasms:

I recognised Auden at once as a new master,
I was by then a bit completely with it.
My love for that odd man has never altered
thro' some of his facile bodiless later books.

The place is done for, England & so on.
The poet mourns but clamps it to a symptom. . . .

How much more concise and memorable this is than when the same sort of thing is said, with the proper hems, haws, polite hesitations, in prose.

How fair is it about the new Auden volume, *City Without Walls?* Auden himself, quite a long time ago, described the effort behind his later poems as "dry farming." He is a great poet, he could never write a volume one would not want to buy, but I think this is one of his weakest later volumes: I think part of the difficulty is that he no longer wants to see England or any part or person of the human or spiritual universe as "done for," feels as a Christian the arrogance of "clamping to a symptom" and wants for the first time (though this was also there in *About the House*) to write about himself, as a person with quirks and oddities, and about purely personal tastes, loves, loyalties. He can do the latter chore only in very formal and tricksy elegies and eulogies, and the former by abruptly disconnected little verse aphorisms, as in "Profile," where the "I" of the originals, if one has seen them, often becomes a "he." He is also an incurable role player, the newest role being the crusty or crusted Christian Tory, but he is honest enough, in the title poem, to admit that the main convenience of this role is to help him to exercise his rhetoric, in a Jeremiah *cum* Juvenal role. Very many poets, I fancy, would like to be crusted Tories if they could be with a clear conscience. The past, after all, exists and the future is highly speculative. But one cannot be a crusted Tory with a clear conscience, however much one physically recoils from the Mrs. Rooseveltian embrace of the professional liberal.

Auden, probably like all good poets, has always used ideologies as elements in composition, points of stress for high rhetoric, rather than ever being committed to them. But I feel here he is being a bit enclosed,

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though the deliberately unpopular stance permits sharp and pertinent remarks:

Even Hate should be precise;
very few White Folks
have fucked their mothers.

But this is followed by a moving short bit in which Auden admits that in the New York subway the only aristocratic faces "he sees are Negro." The proper self-correction of the poetic intelligence is still going on, but there is a little too much sense of improper constriction within a much narrower range of styles and modes than Auden used to have. It is hard for him to write, I will not say intimately, but spontaneously about himself, because in his great early days, in shyness or agony, his self was merely a Wittgensteinian focus on his general perceptions, not in itself interesting, and because the objectified figures in his poems, the "characters," have always of course been symptomatic. He is cursed, as it were, with X-ray eyes.

Reed Whittemore, whose work I wish I had seen before, is a poet correct in metrics and urbane in diction who resembles Auden at least in having a pretty wit. Poems that seem very light in touch often have very deep allegorical and moral layers of meaning. (I wonder how many admirers of Dante know his letter to Can Grande in which he says that the story part — the journey through Hell, Purgatory and to the lower parts of Heaven — conveys merely the literal meaning and that the poem is, as we would say today, "really about" states of the human will and their repercussions on themselves. He might have chosen, for his literal part, a pagan fable or invented a personal story. Dante himself undercuts all that elaborate discussion between Richards and Eliot about "poetry and belief.") An example of this gift is a good funny poem about a bullying Public Librarian, Miss Prunewhip, who keeps the customers in order and makes them put the books back in the right places but is neurotically or even psychotically scared of the world outside the library where the blowing leaves and the drifting faces will not allow themselves to be filed. Academic reader, or intellectual or ideologically committed reader, *de te fabula narratur!* The world is wider, untidier, more fertile and unpredictable than all our thoughts about it. But also, for some kinds of people, the inner world, to be safe, has to be mechanically arranged and dead: and the wild outer world is the symbol of an inner life that has been dodged, or refused.

I have seen Auden, as a great poet temporarily hamstrung by a

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poetically inadequate stance — I am not interested, in this context, in its possible moral, political or even religious inadequacy. I see some of the newer poets as captives of a style, literarily of "literature." Yet Richard Howard, who is the one exciting new figure in this batch, might seem to be much more "literary," in a potentially but not actually damaging way. Cashing in, one might say, on the contemporary boom in Victorian studies, he gives us a series of nineteenth-century portraits, mostly historical, some imaginary but historically typical, in the form of the intimate journal, the verse letter, or the Browningesque dramatic monologue. He takes some bits straight from actual surviving prose, this, for instance, from Sir Walter Scott's journal:

Bad night, last night. Bad dreams about poor Charlotte. Awoke
Thinking my old and inseparable
Friend beside me; only when I got
Fully awake could I persuade myself that she
Was dark, low, and distant,
And that my bed was widowed. Our match was something
Short of love in all its forms, but love
I suspect comes only once in a life[.]

The very prolixity, the overabundance, the innocent self-exposure of great nineteenth-century figures, Scott, Thackeray, Ruskin, the pre–Raphaelite group for instance (and other figures imaginary, but representative and typical, and given to us with the same density of reference), are used by Howard as an ingenious and original tactic for making us read on (as we would all read, for instance, an unpublished manuscript journal, curious about keys to character, alert for a whiff of scandal). And Howard's real and imaginary Victorians are "characters": so much themselves that they are more than themselves, towering into noble or absurd self-caricature. But this fine volume is reverently if sometimes humorously exploratory. There is no touch of Lytton Strachey's sniggering superiority. One might almost say that Howard has invented a new type of historical poem, or perhaps has invented the historical poem properly (as we talk of "the historical novel") for the first time. He helps us to know the Victorians because, in G. M. Young's phrase, he lets us "hear them talking."

William Meredith has been publishing volumes of poems since 1944, when he was in the Air Force, and *Earth Walk* is a selection from these, plus a dozen or so new poems which quite keep up the old standard. It is interesting that Meredith, who has a beautifully clear and straightforward style, explains in his preface that he has chosen from

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his earlier volumes not necessarily those which other people might think the best but those which are in his poetic character, as it has developed, and those which illustrate a mode of poetic deviousness which he prefers to that of plain speaking. That he seems such a natural plain speaker perhaps is part of the deviousness. There is a good early poem, for instance, about how patronage disguises itself as liberalism:

> *Do not embrace your mind's new Negro friend*
> *Or embarrass the blackballed Jew with membership:*
> *There must be years of atonement first, and even then*
> *You may still be the blundering raconteur*
> *With the wrong story, and they may still be free.*

The deviousness, the "twist in the plotting," is in the last six words in the stanza — "*And they may still be free*": they make one go back and read the whole stanza again. There is a similar deviousness in a poem about Robert Frost, a recent one, memorial. Meredith had been told that after a certain stage Frost's attention could be held only by telling him interesting, but character-revealing, lies. He told Frost tall but, I take it, true stories about his exploits on an aircraft carrier and Frost listened for the first time with respect. (But to a young hero, or a really plausible and well-informed liar?) You can read this fine poem I think four ways: *lie*-lie: *lie*-truth: *truth*-lie: *truth*-truth. (The first item is our judgment of Meredith's story to Frost in itself, the second our judgment of Frost's judgment on Meredith's story.) This plain deviousness is a most unusual gift. And the Frost poem is one of the few *unsentimental* memorial poems on a recently dead poet I have ever read and a fine character study of a poet whose character, like his poetry, grows more puzzling the more simple you began by thinking it. Frost was a pretty devious poet, too.

W. S. Merwin, one of the few impeccable verse craftsmen of our time, would have had far wider fame in another period, perhaps in another country, the late eighteenth-century period of Schiller, Goethe, Hölderlin, of incipient romanticism chastened by a yearning (in itself romantic) for pure classical — Greek rather than Romano-Hellenistic, for what the Greek in itself was like had just been discovered — generality, simplicity, distance, coldly representative power, sense of the type: in a word, *coldness*. (Leave it aside that in their politics the Greeks were hot, sweaty, unscrupulous, emotional, as they are today. The *art* matters and it doesn't sweat.) Most famous poets today are interested in either the individual or the sense of communal life. Merwin, at one remove, is interested in the fable or myth as representing, or rather making clear, recurrent human traps and temptations. He does not

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appear on the stage of his own poems, or prose fables, but directs from the wings. One has no idea from his writings what he is like as a person: nor is this probably a question that poetically at all interests him.

I would call attention to one poem in his verse rather than his prose volume (the prose fables or apologues I will understand better, analogically rather than literarily, when I have had longer to read them) — to the splendid poem, it may be one of the best poems of our age, on the Judgment of Paris. One has seen or read boringly innumerable paintings or poems on this story: Merwin is the first poet I have read who has made it exactly clear, in terms of general human psychology, what the goddesses were offering (they were all mousetrap offerings, eat the cheese and get got in the trap, as the goodesses were honest enough to say) and just why Paris chose the least materially rewarding and the most emotionally destructive of all the offerings. What Venus or Aphrodite (Merwin avoids proper names) said was:

Take
her
you will lose her anyway.

Pallas Athene offered Paris power and wisdom, at the cost of *forgetting it anyway*. Hera offered him power and glory (the rank and status of a King's son, and perhaps later of a King) at the cost of *suffering anyway*. Given that all choices must be wrong choices, Merwin conveys that Paris made the right wrong choice. I wish Merwin were read more: young people nowadays are not madly interested in this sort of thing, which suggests that there *was* a very remote past, and that it *is* relevant. I think, as I say, that this particular poem may be a great poem, but who will there be in forty years to read it?

Donald Hall's poems (his publisher says he is unfortunate in that they are sold out before they are reviewed, but I wouldn't count that unfortunate) are deliberately, honestly and undramatically constructed, decent carpentries, like New England frame or clapboard houses. I don't mean that he is *wooden,* though you would have to look pretty hard and long for the burst of passionate impulse or the irrationally memorable line. I quote a short poem, "Exile," where none of the three couplets seems to me in itself anything much, but they joist together as a fairly well balanced, and reasonably lasting, small structure:

A boy who played and talked and read with me
Fell from an apple tree.

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I loved her, but I told her I did not,
And wept, and then forgot.

I walked the streets where I was born and grew,
And all the streets were new.

It still looks very simple, of course, but looking longer along the convergence of the three parallel lines, in temporal perspective, less so: the memory of lost childish innocence (Adam's fall), of self-frustrated and soon forgotten first love, converge at the vanishing point of the three rails in a sense of *le temps retrouvé.* To do that, while still sounding rather like rhymes on a Christmas card, is clever.

John Logan is nothing like so consistently sure in touch. When a volume is full of verse translations and poems about other poets (and the poem about e.e. cummings, unlike Whittemore's fine poem about Frost, strikes me as a very sentimental and rather socially inept one, simply because of its parade of, perfectly genuine of course, intimate knowledge of the poet and his wife) and about artists, one feels the poet has run out of life fuel. But there is one quite extraordinarily good poem, "Lines on Locks," about the contrasting experience of the inside and the outside (where the Erie Canal is) of the old-fashioned Herkimer jail in New York. I felt here a translation into the condensation of verse of the splendid sensitive naturalist tradition in American fiction. How much better Logan would be if he waited for this sort of true subject, and said "Throw culture to the dogs, I'll none of it!"

Aspects like this of Logan's book, the culture-vulture aspects, and perhaps of the determinedly oblique aesthetic fabulizing stance of Merwin's (though I think he is very, very much better than Logan), explain the revolt, which after all is as old as Verlaine, against "literature" or poetry *as* literature or *about* literature, and explain why I shall deal with the last four books very briefly. Hughes's *Crow* is like a new version of the Book of Genesis. God died and in dying begat Nothing and Never. Death rules the world, everything in it, except Crow, who stands for the ruthless animal urge to survive at all costs. In its use of repetitions, its drumming in of the same key ideas again and again, *Crow* is a scripture rather than a poem. It has often the brutal impactive force which is Hughes's main verbal gift as a poet — hammering things in. It has touches of grim humor, and just one short section, "The Kill," a frightening evocation of the birth trauma, struck me as a very good poem in itself. James Dickey's volume is much more humanly interesting. The title poem "Eye-Beaters" is very striking. Some children in an institu-

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tion have to have their hands tied. They have a habit of beating at their eyeballs. Why? The therapist says they like the color flashes and after-images this produces. The rationalist in Dickey says that perhaps they want to blind themselves, because, like Oedipus, they cannot bear to look upon our world. The poet in him invents a more poetic explanation, they are trying to recreate a vision of a primitive world, bears, caves, spears, more exciting, more simple, if also more *obviously* murderous, than ours. Perversely, as he admits, Dickey junks reason, and prefers poetic invention: his explanation may not be true.

There is a complexity of mind in Dickey quite lacking in Hughes, though because of that complexity, not quite an equal punch-up power. I think Dickey dilutes too many of his poems with perhaps biographically or topographically interesting but poetically irrelevant circumstantial detail, and, indeed, his main poetic strategy may be that given enough adventitious detail, shove everything in, the poem, unplanned, will form itself naturally into a whole. Gary Snyder is the opposite, writing the same neat, tight imagist poem over and over again, so that his volume as a whole seems less, not more, than the sum of its discrete parts: no modulation or development. Also I notice that queerly the imagistic poem, when it is about somewhere that one knows, like Kyoto, *doesn't* give one a picture: for evocation of place, old-fashioned descriptive verse is better. I feel that Snyder, like Hughes, is one of the poets whom the young enormously overrate, perhaps because they fear complexity.

Ladies last. Denise Levertov has an easy and natural fluency, and a warm maternal heart, in exactly the right place, but does go on rather: full of the female wisdom that intuitively knows the *what,* and is not troubled by the intellectual male *how.* One gets an occasional fit of the Mother-Smothers. May Swenson, by contrast, is jokey. I enjoyed the whimsical typographical layout (John Hollander does it better) and some of the poems, like the one about the greedy girl at the James Bond movie, made me laugh aloud. But my deep sympathies, obviously, up to Logan, are with the poets on this list who, however imperfectly they succeed sometimes, do at least try to do it in the "old high style." At some stage every critic, to adapt de Gourmont, must generalize his prejudices into rules: it is safe enough for the reader if he knows what the prejudices are.

G. S. Fraser

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TO MAKE A LONG STORY SHORT

TEITLEBAUM'S WINDOW. By Wallace Markfield. Knopf. $6.95.

STANDING FAST. By Harvey Swados. Doubleday. $8.95.

SINGLE FILE. By Norman Fruchter. Knopf. $5.95.

To tell a story, it seems to me, is the reason for fiction. Social propaganda; documentary (see the world as it was then, is now); psychiatric sketch; experiment with language: all these are abuses of story (the last seems least) which overwhelm or distract the reader. To tell the tale therein is not easy in a TV culture which gobbles up information, sentimentalizes over instant sympathies — diets, ecology, Blacks, Indians — its reading habits increasingly tied to the attention span called upon by three-minute commercials or, at best, the twelve-minute movie fragments sandwiched between them.

Doom echoes in the voices of editors as they speak to you (confidentially) of the future of the novel. Bookstores which seem to be bent on warehousing bric-a-brac for birthdays and anniversaries are refusing to put out most new fiction. And the underground audience trades catchwords, mumbles slogans of brotherhood, not interested in telling their own stories, let alone listening to others. (One hitcher I recently picked up riding across Colorado enthused about his bag of dynamite grass, "Wow, it's so good, it wipes you out from one word to the next. I mean you can't see the end of your sentence!")

This is a bleak view — that except for a few zen formulas, we are beyond sentence, paragraph and, of course, story.

I choose to think not. I believe that the TVs are going to be blinking off one by one in households soon, that many will be coming home from the long trip, that there is already a hunger for stories, those analogue narratives by which we entertain and learn about ourselves — stories, the word dream dance of extended experience.

And since the American dream has been so rudely shattered in the last generation, it is not difficult to return to tribal literature and consider three logs of modern Jewish experience, *Teitlebaum's Window,* by Wallace Markfield, *Standing Fast,* by Harvey Swados and Norman Fruchter's *Single File.*

Do we tar these writers by categorizing them as "Jewish"? Defiantly parochial myself, I see it as no slur. A Belgian playwright, De Ghelderode, spoke of trying to create out of that necessarily narrow back-

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ground, "patriale work . . . work that might be ancestral and traditionally of my own home, while still being accessible to men of my time everywhere." "Of my home" is a definition of beginnings, of places, the spot we take off from. In fiction, which ought, according to my sights, to look into the author's own dream world, subconscious, magic and terror of childhood, one has to come genuinely to grips with tribe, family, those house ghosts that follow and give tension to one's stories. I could argue that all stories are ghost tales, not necessarily literal ghosts but of anxiety or guilt so unbearable that we enter the realm of hallucination where not just unreal worlds but absurd worlds mingle with what we take to be logical.

Given this partisan joy in fiction it's probably easy to guess that I would like Wallace Markfield's *Teitlebaum's Window*. Despite bad overwriting (oh for a good editor at Random and Knopf, an ounce of honest boredom and whole forests could be saved) it remains in my imagination and I have to come around half circle and praise the beginning which I objected to last year as tedious because of the insistence of its joking, the laughter cruel, silly, repetitious. Yet it's that very teasing which is the geshmack, the taste of all sick Jewish tenements of Brooklyn, the Bronx. Markfield details a jungle of sexual misunderstanding, a world whose religious rituals have broken down, gone bankrupt, so that a series of homemade games, a collage of influences from radio, the movies, those priests of magic for the thirties, turn the parents and children upside down. Everyone is acting. (A generation before, the hysterics were praying.) Only no one quite believes in their roles. Look at "the Mommy!" Listen to "the Daddy!" "Call me the Pop!" Mr. and Mrs. Sloan shout back and forth in their kitchen at their prodigy, "Second-Highest-in-Achievement-Test-Kid" Simon.

Competing for his mother's breast with a father no better than an infant himself (crazed by a World War One bootcamp, elastic bandages wound as spats around his ankles, black shako and faded blue cap, appropriately, a movie usher) — even that tit a stage prop, "the Momma," Malvena, "the Orphan's" kitchen a set to replay her life, its great moments, the outrages — Simon's only defense is laughter.

The Sloan family is Markfield's archetype. All over Brooklyn children are seeing too much nakedness. As they grow into adolescence they veil the mysteries with sick jokes about their parents' lovemaking. Sex is not holy but funny, yet the laughing strains and strains echoing the deep embarrassment of the children over their own feelings. They grow up terrified of love. At the end of *Teitlebaum's Window,* Simon, a college graduate, can not face impending marriage. Yes, the family is

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hopelessly bourgeois, the girl cutesy, silly, but so is Simon. Adept at squeezing, pinching, petting, the "Second-Highest-in-Achievement-Test–Kid" goes into shock at the thought of real intimacy. He flees back to the familiar, comfortable insanity of his parents, joins the army, that band of permanent infants. Is it because this marriage is a dead end? Or is it because Simon is disabled? By parodying the girl and her family, the Grossbergs, as "gross," the author leaves the answer ambiguous.

Markfield as a writer is a man somewhat distracted by his own gifts. There is the professional funny man who can poke at the mores of the New York Jews, rabble and intellectuals — for which the applause is easy. Yet there are moments in his fiction of more powerful import to me: the mountainous pretzel woman who appears out of the graveyard air in *To An Early Grave,* overpowering his hero and enslaving him to her endless, penurious task; the grotesque anger which poisons the life of his protagonist in *The Decline of Sholem Waldman;* the crazy imagination of Adrian Levy in *Teitlebaum's Window* trying to create poetry out of the bleak possibilities of his employment agency. In these apparitions there is horror and beauty, a true telling of the dreadful imaginings of our Brooklyn tribe.

Single File, Norman Fruchter's novel, is far away from any formal ties, either in coloration or style, with the traditional Jewish novel. Yet so is modern Judaism and this journal of a social worker trying to find some sense of order, meaning, to his work, life, in the chaotic Black, Italian, Puerto Rican slums of New York City is a fine rendering of a familiar world: those countless contemporaries and students who have gone into the welfare departments of America, half out of a secular ethical commitment, half out of despair at their prospects in the arts or professions. Fruchter's voice is quite good, crisp, staccato, no overwriting here. The problem with the book is simple. Rather than staying within the consciousness of his hero, the social worker, whose dilemma Fruchter notes impeccably, sexual boredom, intellectual impotence, despair before the hopelessness of the poverty he ministers to, the novelist tries to move into the head of an Am-Ha-Aretz, Matto, an Italian laborer who is drawn to the senseless killing that is (supposed to be) at the center of the novel's tale.

No, it doesn't work. The construct is careful and painstaking but it's papier-mâché. There is no real sympathy, love, hate; and the book is burdened with tasteful artificial chapters fleshing out Matto. The energy that ought to have gone into understanding the social worker is wasted trying to penetrate a blockhead.

The best moments in *Single File* come in its final chapters where,

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caught between the claims of Angelina, the Italian mistress he shares with a policeman, and Laurie, his bloodless but sympathetic wife, the social worker turns painfully on a spit of his own making. All through the book, the voices of Laurie and Angelina observe him with sad detachment, a brilliant device in which they echo the social worker's own notes. Slowly he sinks into perverse dreams where only the thought of Angelina's little girl can arouse him. In a last surprise, his fiery mistress throws the tokens of his impotence at him. For a moment we touch real dread.

How to read Harvey Swados's *Standing Fast?* As an encyclopedia of the non-Stalinist left — fascinating. As a novel — boring. All the characters have to bear the weight of Mr. Swados leaning over their shoulders explaining. Actions speak louder! A noisy third person is constantly giving us quickly psychoanalytical insights, philosophical digressions, journalistic roundups of the situation. A mutual friend of Swados's and mine warned me that I was not the right one to review *Standing Fast*. Probably. In terms of historical appreciation I can not smile and cry recognizing the roll call of old fights and compromises out of the thirties and forties. I'm told many of the younger radicals also enjoy the book. OK, but I'm a reader for whom the excitement has to be created, not recalled. The heavy furniture of the melodramatic plot, moved like ponderous set pieces from one chapter to the next, deadens most of my joy in the chronicle. As line by line excitement goes, Swados is more compelled by sex than revolution. The prose goes taut wherever there's a hard-on. Only for all too brief patches, the wonder-filled account of a Retail Clerks' strike paralyzing the city of Oakland, a wartime sitdown by the UAW at the automobile plants, riots by disgusted servicemen in Panama City, does his pen really scratch for the cause. And there is a fine portrait buried in these annals, the face of Baruch Glantzman, an old Stalinist, mind and body paralyzed, ugly, cruel, holding on to a half-dead cause, half-dead limbs, poisoning his family, a shadow that darkens the book. Had the author remained within the Glantzman's kitchen perhaps there would have been time to probe the agonies among enlightened labor families caused by the splits and shifts of the thirties' left. I've heard these stories from students at CCNY: fathers beaten up by brothers; factional arguments which the protagonists resolved with fists and clubs. Instead *Standing Fast* tries to be a panorama of the US Left through three decades. It goes on and on, a liberal soap box opera, a Trotskyite TV serial. Nice, but —

There *was* a story here, honest and bitter, the disillusion of the socialist intellectuals who hoped to capture the imagination of Amer-

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ican labor, their gradual withdrawal from shoulder to shoulder contact with the working class. Finally, what is most interesting to me and what qualifies *Standing Fast* to stand within the Jewish canon, is the deep suspicion of that salt of the earth, the poor white trash of America. It is no accident that Albie Small, who comes down from the hills to join the radical labor movement, ends up with the American Nazi Party. Anti-Semitism keeps surfacing as the wisdom of the proletariat, its secret knowledge, for poor Irishmen and hillbillies. In exposing this vein Swados uncovers a real paranoia of the American Jewish labor organizers, but he hardly digs in it. Strip mining!

Perhaps the world of *Standing Fast* lay too close to Harvey Swados's imagination to be searched painfully. What we get are cartoons of people, Black labor leaders and civil rights organizers, Italian painters and sexpots, Macedonian parents, Charles Van Doren, Trotskyite millionaires, all of whom would be better served if Harvey Swados had addressed them in the first person. For there is no interest in *Standing Fast* in the irrational, the dream life of human beings, the anxiety which is finally inexplicable. All the experience of the book is understood, psychologized, plotted. "I write what I don't know," Robert Creeley declared, paraphrasing Franz Kline. But Harvey Swados knew most of *Standing Fast* before he began it (alas, so did we). There was, is, no mystery in the telling.

Mark Mirsky

CHANGES

THE WILL TO CHANGE: POEMS 1968-1970. By Adrienne Rich. Norton. $6.00; paper $1.95.

THE BOOK OF NIGHTMARES. By Galway Kinnell. Houghton Mifflin. $4.50; paper $2.95.

BRIEFINGS: POEMS SMALL & EASY. By A. R. Ammons. Norton. $6.00; paper $1.95.

Like other cultivated poets of her generation — like Merwin, Snodgrass and James Wright — Adrienne Rich is haunted into significance as much by what she has changed *from* as by changing at all or by what she is changing to. Recurrence, memory, any presentiment of the old order, of the poem as contraption, is what this poet obsessively,

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creatively combats. In her sixth book, then, there will be a constant imagery of inconstancy, of breaking free, of fracturing, of shedding and molting:

how you broke open, what sheathed you
until this moment
I know nothing about it
my ignorance of you amazes me
now that I watch you
starting to give yourself away
to the wind

The governing (or anarchic) emblems in this taut, overturning book are more likely to be drawn from almost anywhere than from poetry, from anything but verse in its decorous accorded sense, the ritual of a departure and return, a refrain which is indeed a refraining as well, a reluctance to violate repetition. Rather the figures will be derived from dreams and dedications, letters, elegies, photographs, movies: "I am an instrument in the shape / of a woman trying to translate pulsations / into images / for the relief of the body and the reconstruction of the mind" she says in one place, and in another: "I pledged myself to try any instrument that came my way. Never to refuse one from conviction of incompetence." Ridding the self, then, of what it had been, of what it had done ("language is the map of our failures") in order to get on with it, to make room, to make way: these poems are that way, a trail blazed, a transformation wrought chiefly by burning. The implication throughout is that you do not know what you are, all you know is the ashes of what you have been; death creates you:

to float free
up through the smoke of brushfires
and incinerators.

The movies (how right that word is for a poet who says "seeing is changing," or again, "I thought of my words as changing minds, / hadn't my mind also to suffer changes?") are the major representative form here, and the major piece in this book is an extended series of writings called, focally, "Shooting Script" — what Adrienne Rich herself calls a conversation of sounds melting constantly into rhythms, "a cycle whose rhythm begins to change the meanings of words." Preoccupied by the wreckage of urban and amatory experiment and tradition alike, this poet abandons what she calls the rhythms "of choice, the lost methods" for the sake, the favor of something much more likely, an explosion of possibilities:

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once the last absolutes were torn to pieces
you could begin . . .
every impulse of light exploding
from the core
as life flies out of us.

That concern of her earlier books which is indeed a myth of concern, a solicitude of critique, of caring, nursing and tending, is pretty much done away with here, except in one tender instance:

I have sucked the wound in your hand to sleep
but my lips were trembling.
Tell me how to bear myself,
how it's done, the light kiss falling
accurately
on the cracked palm.

And even here, the familiar — familiar, I mean, to Adrienne Rich's other poems — taking of pains is turned into body English, the somatic discharge of disaster ("I am bombarded yet / I stand") which will allow her to expose, and even exult in, "external" events in terms of self-sufficiency as well as of first aid to others:

the sole of the foot is a map, the palm of the hand a letter
learned by heart and worn close to the body

As is apparent in these quotations, pieces of language broken open, dated but unpunctuated, with their axiological rather than external use of enjambment — the line as notation rather than as unit, as tessera rather than as structural member — *The Will to Change* is not made up of discreet poems, in any sense, nor is it made up at all. It is a text, a graph ("the surface is always lucid, / my shadows are under the skin") which must be read through to the end, yielded to, held fast, for these are notes toward a supreme somatic fiction:

The notes for the poem are the only poem
the mind collecting, devouring
all these destructibles . . .
the mind of the poet is changing
the moment of change is the only poem

What is striking, what is even stricken about Adrienne Rich's poetry is her probity and resource in the face of fracture, "the fracture of order / the repair of speech / to overcome this suffering." For she is, like her radical affiliates, determined to overcome. She is Sylvia Plath in reverse, not eager or even willing to be still, to be stone, to be dead; but rather letting the stillness be broken within and around her, letting herself be lapidated (can we say stoned, any more?), letting herself discover what

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the death of others does to the self — Adrienne Rich lets herself discover that, for one thing, the death of other creates the self, as the renunciation of illusion creates identity:

> *Now to give up the temptations of the projector; to see instead*
> *the web of cracks filtering across the plaster.*
> *To read there the map of the future, the roads radiating from*
> *the initial split, the filaments thrown out from that impasse.*
> *To reread the instructions on your palm; to find there how*
> *the lifeline, broken, keeps its direction.*

For Galway Kinnell, in his fourth book of poems, it is not the death of others which creates the self; Kinnell does not have much truck with others. Rather, it is the death of the self which, simply, creates. The poet puts it to us with his characteristic tone, a tone of manliness without machismo, of force without brutality, in a statement from a forthcoming study of poetry: "Poetry has taken on itself the task of breaking out of the closed ego. . . . The death of the self I seek, in poetry and out of poetry, is not a drying up or withering. It is a death, yes, but a death out of which one might hope to be reborn more giving, more alive, more open, more related to the natural life." One cannot take exception to these good intentions without simultaneously opposing motherhood (though Kinnell, in his exaltation of fatherhood, might be said to do just that by any competent Women's Liberatrix), but I should like to note the pervasive superstition, one of the most inescapable of our times, the superstition of openness as, in itself, a Good Thing. Here Kinnell, though as concerned with the myth of metamorphosis as Adrienne Rich, is on marshier ground, for he is all concerned with changing to, not with changing from. He does not give much heed to the past, for is there not the future? To put it another way, he is forever opening up, and so what is left behind, untended, tends to assume a charred and neglected aspect as Kinnell greets the new life, the life of his children, of the earth, of his own transfigured body.

The Book of Nightmares is a single poem in ten parts ("it is right / at the last, that one / and zero / walk off together, walk off the end of these pages together, / one creature / walking away side by side with the emptiness"), and it is about the consummation of the self in the one sense in order to achieve consummation in the other. It is about how "the raindrops trying / to put the fire out / fall into it and are / changed" — leaving therefore "this wet site / of old fires" which is the poet's body, which is the earth and the human mind. But not human memory. Memory and all it implies of convention, decorum, recurrence

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and discretion are largely flouted in the ordering of this work. It *is* wonderfully ordered, composed, this dream book of Kinnell's, and Denise Levertov is quite right, in her jacket comment, to remark how brilliantly the poem holds its disparate apertures together, how it coheres; it is all one text, but it is not written in verse, it is written, merely, in poetry, and there are findings of loss in the performance which founder in a waste of invention. As Wordsworth said about Goethe, it is not memorable enough, for it does not come back enough to itself. One discovers this when the poet himself, an astonishing performer indeed, recites this work — he alters it in the recital; for him it is not a piece of language with which nothing more can be done, but a text, a piece of language with which anything may be done, provided it is done by himself. What Kinnell calls "the body-Arabic of these nightmares" never allows us to cool down, to enjoy that interval between burning and burning which is implied, precisely, by the work of *lines*; instead, as the poet himself accounts for it:

> *on the absolute whiteness of pages*
> *a poem writes itself out: its title — the dream*
> *of all poems and the text*
> *of all loves — "Tenderness toward Existence."*

Exulting, then, in the general conflagration which leaves no member standing, Kinnell employs "this languished alphabet / of worms, these last words / of himself" in order to discover what is not himself. And he does discover it. The translator of Villon and Bonnefoy has a justified confidence in his own compositional energies — "the carnal / nightmare soars back to the beginning" — the power to make up a poetry out of a hope, a wonder, a question:

> *Can it ever be true — all bodies, one body, one light*
> *made of everyone's darkness together?*

And he answers with the old stoic rapture, if the oxymoron will stand, the one so flagrant in *Body Rags,* his latest book:

> *Never mind.*
> *The self is the least of it.*
> *Let our scars fall in love.*

Addressing himself throughout to his totem animals, the bear and the hen, and to his daughter and son, as well as to various shadowy loves who are indeed unselved, Kinnell closes his fire sermon ("this corpse will not stop burning!") with a magnificent apostrophe to his own powers, the powers he has referred to in his lectures as "the standard

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of what it is to be alive — very high. It was set in our infancy" — powers which are irregular, vast and unpropped, as well as, or because, unpolicied:

This poem
if we shall call it that,
or concert of one
divided among himself, this earthward gesture . . .
this free floating of one
opening his arms into the attitude
of flight, as he obeys the necessity and falls . . .

Four years after his latest inventions, and two years after his even later inventory of them [*Selected Poems* 1968], A. R. Ammons published *Uplands,* three dozen lyrical pieces concerned with initiations, submissions to motion, giving way, getting started. And now, hard upon *Uplands,* appears *Briefings*: *Poems Small & Easy.* Small and easy! Ever since his deprecating "Foreword" to his first book [*Ommateum* 1955], and his embarrassed asides braided right into his adding-machine epyllion [*Tape for the Turn of the Year* 1965], it has been evident that Ammons is a great craftsman, a gorgeous artist in his poems, but an erratic stage director or prompter from the wings. What he calls "small and easy" may not be anything of the kind, and need not be called anything at all. He is ever uneasy, this poet of what David Kalstone once identified as subversive bravado, as he walks his way into "song's improvident / center / lost in the green bush"; and like Ammons we shall be at a loss to say much that is to the point about his genre, about his poetics, though the affinities are there, the spectral precursors and the a posteriori spooks — Emerson, Dickinson, Whitman, then Pound, Williams, Stevens. It is not to the *point* that we are to speak, anyway, as Ammons keeps telling us — rather it is out of muddle and even mud that we get what matters; it is out of chaos that cosmos comes:

between life and me obtrude
no symbolic forms:
grant me no mission . . .
leave me in this black rich country
uncertainty, labor, fear: *do not*
steal the rewards of my mortality.

We are, then, to be at a loss with Ammons, and happy to be there, for it is only when losses are permitted, invited even, that there are possibilities invoked. In the poem called, crucially, "Poetics," Ammons admits how he goes about making, precisely, by leaving off as much as by inventing, by finding:

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I look for the forms
things want to come as
from what black wells of possibility,
how a thing will unfold: . . .
not so much looking for the shape
as being available
to any shape that may be
summoning itself
through me
from the self not mine but ours.

The search is for a poetic incarnation, but it is also an abandonment of the search, a hope of poetic disincarnation, a way of overcoming by literally *undergoing* the separate self. In this, Ammons's energies are dedicated concurrently with those of Adrienne Rich, of Galway Kinnell, though Ammons has more affinities with the former's sense that what we change *from* engrosses what we change *to*; and he has more affinities with Kinnell's chthonic identifications, his trust that there will be "no foothold higher than the ground." It is only in Ammons, though, that I find all three moments — the changing from, the changing, and the changing to — exalted equally. Only Ammons, I think, of all American poets today, has — when he is not diverted into his hip asides — the capacity to endow the moment of loss, the moment of metamorphosis and the moment of release with an equal light, "the blue obliteration of radiance."

Indeed the three moments are what Ammons calls, in his accounting for events, for outcomes, for irreversible exits and recurrences alike, ambiance, salience, radiance. These are his three favorite words for the phenomenon signified (there is a place), then for the phenomenon abandoned (the place can be left), then for the phenomenon sanctified (only loss reveals what the reward was to be). It is no accident, except insofar as everything in Ammons is literally an accident, a falling-to, a befalling, it is no accident that the greatest poem in this latest book is the last, and neither small nor easy, the cross-titled poem "The City Limits," which begins its 18-line single sentence "When you consider the radiance" and ends with the acknowledgment that each thing is merely what it is, and all that can be transcended is our desire for each thing to be more than what it is, so that for such a consideration of the losses of being, the very being of loss, "fear lit by the breadth of such calmly turns to praise." It is all there in Ammons — the fear and the light, the calm and the breadth, the turning and the praise, and that is why he is a great poet.

Richard Howard

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KENT, Ohio, August 3 (AP) — Dr. Glenn Olds, newly appointed president of Kent State University, said today . . . that the shooting deaths of four Kent State students on May 4, 1970, "is not typical of universities and that it was an accident and probably would not happen again." . . . Olds, a former representative to the United Nations, said, "What happened at Kent, in my view, is accentuated convergence of . . . pressures in decision-making and confrontation."
(*Chicago Tribune,* August 4, 1971.) Contributed by Carl Johnson, Chicago, Illinois. K. M. Kodama, Tokyo, Japan, submitted a similar quote from the *Asahi Evening News,* Tokyo.

A study being released today concludes that, measured by the input-output yardsticks more commonly applied to other industries, "there is a strong possibility that there has been no productivity change in the production of higher education."

The study, "Resource Use in Higher Education," . . . seems to confirm that higher education has operated as a handicraft industry — basically unaffected by technological advances and automation — in which input and output have grown at about the same rate.
(*The New York Times,* July 8, 1971.)

Educators and guidance counselors should use "every art and science" . . . to know their pupils better, . . . Isaiah E. Robinson, the president of the city Board of Education, said yesterday.

Speaking at a forum held by the Public Education Association, Mr. Robinson said that "if astrology is correct," the reason some pupils pose behavior problems was not because they were emotionally disturbed but because their "birth signs" conflicted with those of other children or, perhaps, those of the teacher. . . .
(*The New York Times,* October 8, 1971.)

WAR AND PEACE
IN 3 HOURS
AND 35 MINUTES.
Evelyn Wood
Reading Dynamics Institute
Portland
(Portland *Oregonian,* August 1971.) Contributed by John M. Gogol, Forest Grove, Oregon.

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by Allen Wheelis

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